ULTRAVOX: TRIED AND TESTED TONES FROM 80s SYNTH-POP ROYALTY

THE **UK'S NUMBER ONE** BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE

Bass Guitar Magazine

Interviewed

GEDDY LEE

"Your bass sound goes where you go!"

The Rush legend digs deeper than ever before

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The mud, the madness!

DUCK DUNN

We pay tribute to the master

Reviewed

Modulus Q5 and FU4

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INTRODUCING…

5 NEW, EXPERT COLUMNISTS

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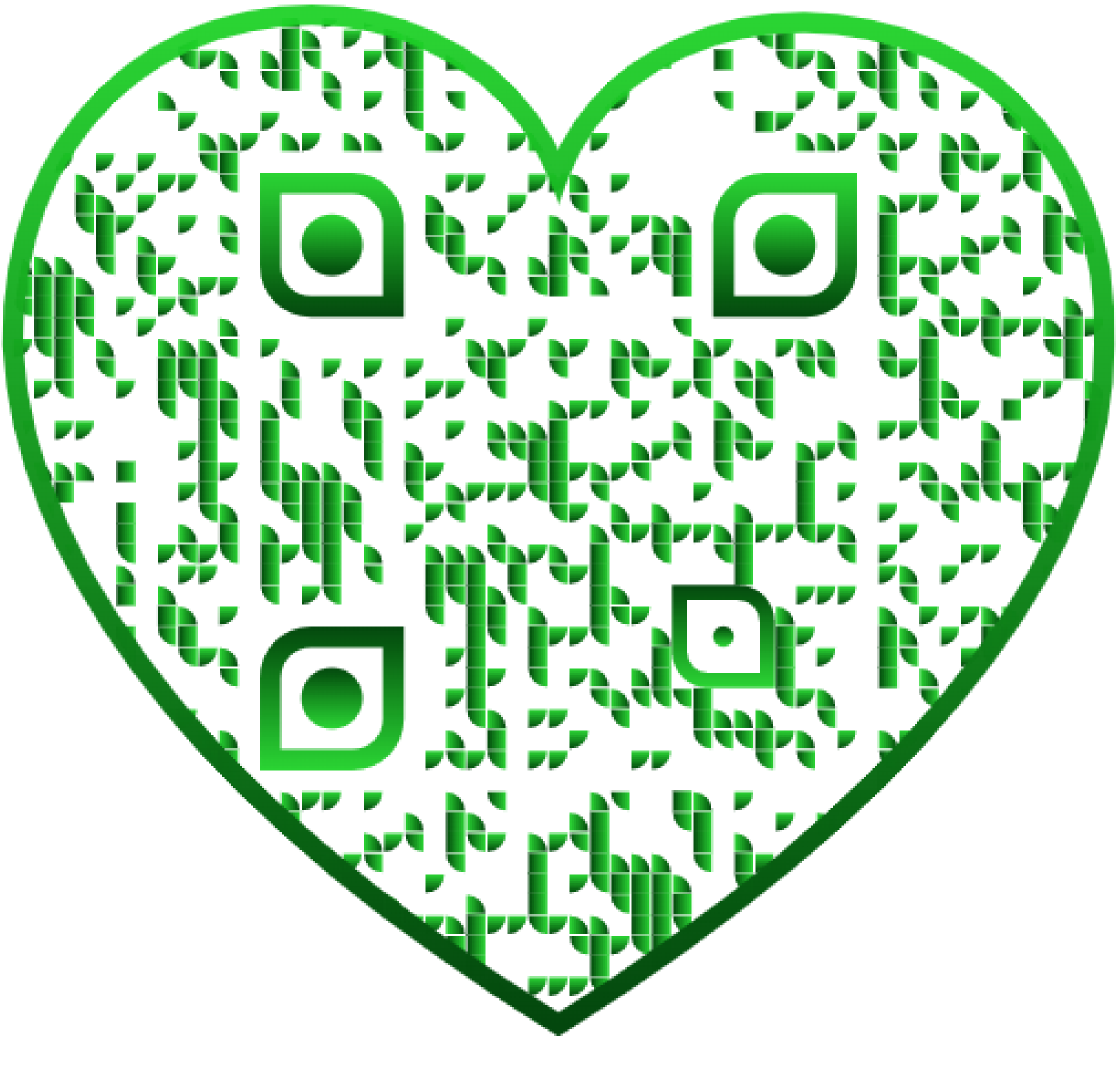

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Grace Note

Let's not mess about here, shall we? You're reading this for a reason, and that reason is that you're as passionate about bass as we are. You know, like we do, that bass isn't something that we do just to pass the time: we play because it's our calling, because it's something we were destined to do, and not just because it's a great way to annoy the neighbours. Your bass will take you somewhere special, away from the mundane realities of everyday life, from the moment you strap on your first instrument to your first step onto the stage at Wembley Arena. (Or possibly Catford Working Men's Club, but you know what we mean.)

With this in mind, we'd like to introduce not one but five new and frankly amazing columnists to *Bass Guitar Magazine*. Say hello to our spanking new section The Front Line, so named because the bassists featured there are out there at the coalface of bass, levelling crowds night after night and delivering pearls of wisdom especially for you. Between them they cover all the bases (ahem), from rising jazz star Ruth Goller of Acoustic Ladyland, Michael McKeegan from Irish rockers Therapy?, Paolo Gregoletto of American metal stars Trivium and extended-range supremo Stewart McKinsey (and we do mean 'extended': Stu plays a 10-string, the madman). When you've read their words, take a look at Paul Geary's new column: as you'll know from his slapalicious pic in regular *BGM* ad pages, Paul is one of the British bass scene's heroes, laying down the lines with many great artists. No, don't thank us: it's a pleasure.

All this, and I haven't even mentioned our in-depth interview with the legendary Geddy Lee, who is possibly the world's greatest bass player; our obituary of the late, much-missed Donald 'Duck' Dunn; chats with Jonathan Hischke and Chris Cross; and reviews of awe-inspiring gear from Modulus, Caparison, Ernie Ball, TC Electronic and Cornell. What are you waiting for? Enjoy, and I'll see you on the other side.

Joel McIver, Editor

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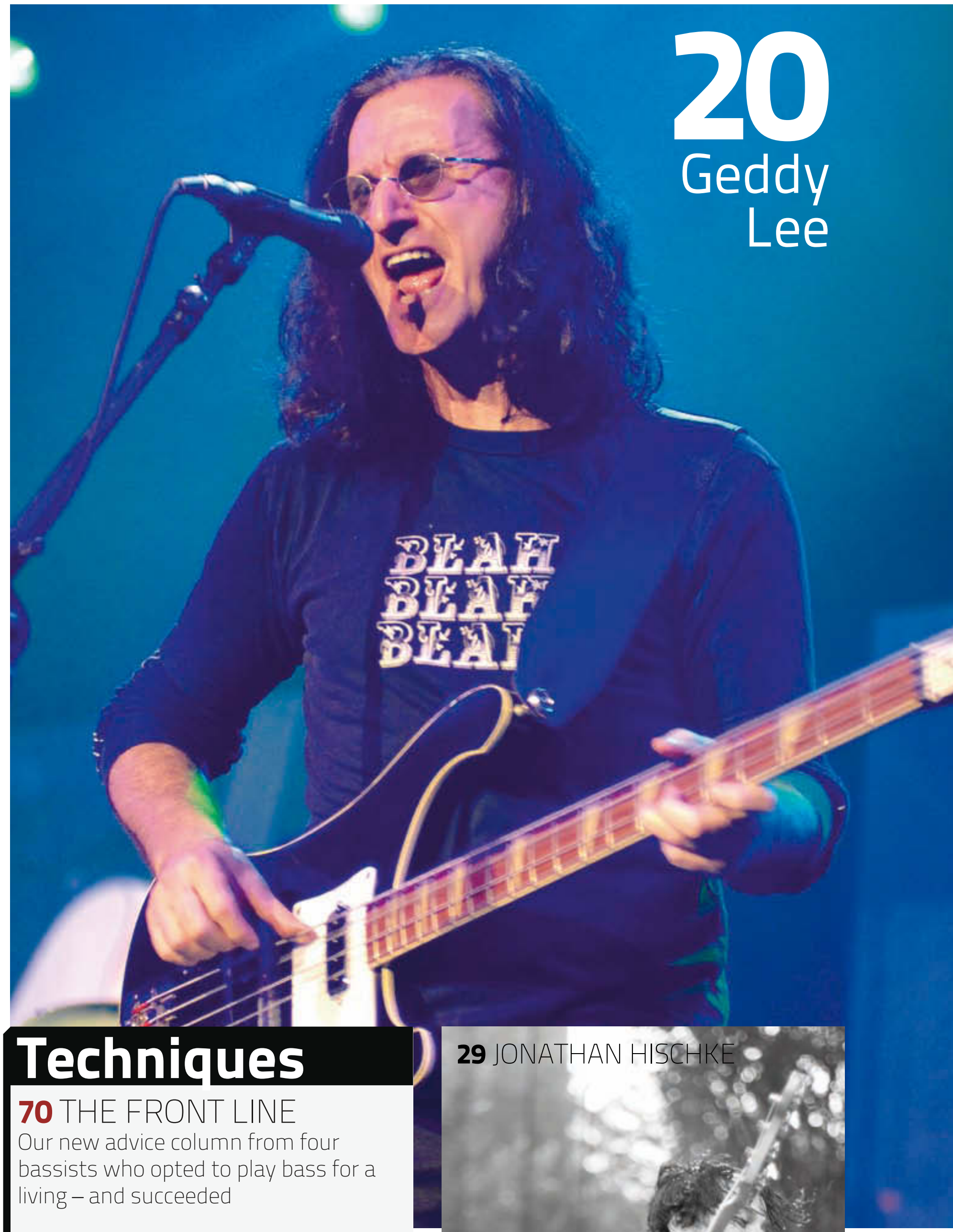

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Techniques

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The LowDown

News and grooves from the bass dimension

Jaco Movie In Development

September will mark 25 years since the great Jaco Pastorius met his untimely end at the age of only 35, and if you've been wondering why no-one has ever made a film about him, wonder no more. Tentatively titled Jaco, the documentary should be on the silver screen this autumn. It's being directed by Stephen Kijak, who took the driving seat for the 2010 film *Stones In Exile* about the Rolling Stones album *Exile On Main Street*, and has been financed by none other than Robert Trujillo of Metallica, a lifelong Pastorius fan. "Jaco was my hero growing up. Hearing him was like hearing Eddie Van Halen doing 'Eruption' for the first time," said Trujillo, currently finishing off a world tour with his band. "You thought, 'What instrument is that?' I loved jazz fusion and branched out from there, but Jaco had an edge that far exceeded his jazz persona. He was funk, he was rock, he was soul. And his whole attitude was punk."

Trujillo, who met his hero towards the end of his life, added: "The film for me is from the heart. I wanted to rescue him, but I learned that Jaco didn't want to be rescued." Asked what made Jaco so great, he explained: "Well, there's just sheer genius, of course. But frankly, maybe his being bipolar helped him push past boundaries that are there for the rest of us. Because Jaco was nothing if not fearless." We'll be featuring more information about this long-overdue project when we have it.

Lounge Music

You'll recall BGM writer Mike Brooks's sterling review of two tasty Overwater basses in April's issue? Well, one of said Overwaters was the very first Inspiration 5, serial number 001, built specifically for the Frankfurt show earlier this year. It's now available for purchase at the Manchester Bass Lounge, the Overwater outlet for Greater Manchester and Cheshire, who recently commissioned a "very contemporary" version of the Classic Overwater Original Series bass, manufactured in the 1980s. Drew Dempster of MBL, pictured here with Overwater's Chris May, says: "We were chuffed to bits to have the opportunity to acquire this bass which, at its price point, will enable many more players to own a handbuilt Overwater." Why not go over and drool at it? We know we did.

www.manchesterbasslounge.com

Bag it up

British gig-bag manufacturer Martin Ritter has launched two new ranges for bass, the Lørz and Hérgét lines, which we think would look great above the mantelpiece at *BGM's* country retreat in Berkshire. The Lørz bags come in tartan and quilted versions and are designed to accommodate standard bass guitar shapes as well as more wacky designs (we're looking at you, BC Rich). The interiors are shaped to offer extra protection for the headstock, bridge and endpin protection zones, and there's even a mobile phone pouch so you can answer that lucrative session call. The Hérgét goes even further, offering an anti-wear base protector panel with added diamond bumpers, polyester bridge and headstock protectors, polyester end-pin protection, large neck positioned pedal pouch, a large A4 music pouch and an additional front accessory pocket with a high density padded lap-top pouch. So now there's no excuse for looking like a slob when you show up to record bass for Bob Dylan/Peter Gabriel/Right Said Fred/the wealthy client of your choice.

Info: www.lorz.co, www.herget.co

COMPETITION WINNER

The lucky bassist who scooped up David Ellefson's Rock Shop studio app and a Pocketlabworks Iriffport connector is ***Paul Blute from Torquay***. Congratulations that man, and thanks to all who entered.

One in a Marillion

Bassist Pete Trewavas is the latest endorser of Warwick basses, the German maufacturer tells us. A member of Marillion and side projects Transatlantic and Edison's Children, Trewavas has used a Warwick Thumb NT 4-string since the 1980s, when his band first came to prominence. His influences come from musicians as disparate as Chris Squire and John Entwistle, and it is a mark of his skill as a bass player that his colleagues in Transatlantic come from bands as iconic as Dream Theater, Spock's Beard and The Flower Kings. Look out for a full interview with the great man in a forthcoming issue of *BGM*.

www.marillion.com, www.warwick.de

Play Time

Sick of work? Itching to get your fingers round a bass? Well, you could do worse than head down to the frankly amazing-looking Guitar Lounge, headquarters of Sims Guitar Works in Ashford, Kent. Martin Sims, who has essentially got himself the nicest office in the world (if you discount *BGM's* fur-lined command bunker in the Bahamas, of course), tells us: "We've worked tirelessly to get everything together so people can now have a good look round our workshop, and also enjoy an up-close-and-personal look, listen and play of our instruments in comfortable, easy-going surroundings". Just take a look at the picture: Sims has lined a 19th century converted oast-house with instruments from Enfield, Modulus, Eminence and more, just waiting for you to show up and play them. Parking is ample and free, and the Guitar Lounge is a short taxi ride away from Ashford International Train Station. What are you waiting for? ***Contact Martin on 01233 822522 or martin@simscustom.com.***

Triumvirate

Each month we select three essential albums from a genre or player.
This month:

MIKE INEZ

1 JAR OF FLIES ALICE IN CHAINS

Why You Need It: Inez joined Alice in Chains following Mike Starr's departure after the recording of the Dirt album, and is on fine form on *Jar of Flies*, which sold over three million copies and hit number one on the American charts. The single, 'No Excuses', features a tasty verse riff, with some satisfying slides that proves it's not about how many notes you play, but what you do with them. He also co-wrote 'I Stay Away', the other single released from the album, with its tight groove and sludgy pre-chorus riff.

2 IT'S FIVE O' CLOCK SOMEWHERE SLASH'S SNAKEPIT

Why You Need It: This album by Slash's side project sold a cool million copies after its release. The supergroup's album is a little gem of grimy blues-rock. Inez's grungy tone is all over the album, mixed well to the fore, particularly on 'Lower' where his greasy bends in the verse and fills in the chorus perfectly underpin Slash's guitar work. Other standouts are found on the melodic 'Beggars And Hangers On' and the energetic instrumental 'Jizz Da Pit'.

3 ALICE IN CHAINS ALICE IN CHAINS

Why You Need It: The final album to feature singer Layne Staley, before his death from a heroin overdose, sees contributions from Inez on several songs. On 'Brush Away', Inez's pick-driven line locks in tightly with the drums, providing a perfect bedrock for Jerry Cantrell's sweeping guitar parts. On 'God Am' he's so tight with Cantrell's guitar that the effect is like a sonic sledgehammer, while on 'Heaven Beside You' he shows his deft melodic side once again.

Why We Love... Duff McKagan

Standout Tracks: 'Sweet Child O' Mine', 'Paradise City', 'Rocket Queen', 'Locomotive', 'Misery'
Recommended Albums: *Appetite For Destruction, Contraband, Dark Days*

Could there be a more rock'n'roll bass player than Duff McKagan? Perhaps Nikki Sixx runs him close, but there's just something so 'rawk' about the towering ex-Guns N' Roses bass player that, for our money, he has to be a frontrunner. His long trail of excess is well documented (particularly eloquently in his excellent autobiography), culminating in the explosion of his pancreas, which means he now lives a sober lifestyle. It's not just his cool demeanour and low-slung bass that does it for us, though; he's actually a pretty tasty player, too. His melodic intro to GNR's 'Sweet Child O' Mine' helped lift the bass to the fore, and is as memorable a part as Slash's warbling guitar riff. His scooped tone and funky groove is all over 'Rocket Queen' (Duff's a big fan of Prince and funk music), and we really dig his line in the song's second half, which carries the melody under Axl's plaintive vocals. Although his playing was pushed down in the mix on the *Use Your Illusion* albums, he came back to the fore with Velvet Revolver. For some of his finest playing, check out *Dark Days*, the first album from his side project Loaded, which is one of the most underrated rock albums we've ever heard. Duff, this beer's for you.

Revolverrrrr

Every month we reveal a bass-line that we can't get out of our heads…
This Month:

THREE LITTLE BIRDS

Bassist Aston 'Family Man' Barrett
Album Exodus, Bob Marley & The Wailers (1977)

No-one can dispute the influence and extraordinary talent of Bob Marley. His skills as a songwriter and lyricist have ensured that his music is continually rediscovered by new generations, decades after his untimely passing. However, the importance of the pulsing grooves of Aston Barrett as a contributor to the popularity of Marley's music shouldn't be underestimated. His deep sense of groove is at play on this, one of Bob's most enduring tracks. With just a few notes in the right place, Aston makes sure anyone who listens is nodding their head within seconds, and open to the uplifting message of the song. Heavily syncopated and hypnotically repetitive, the line is so laid back that it's practically horizontal.

Road warrior

The Pro's On The Road Survival Kit

Name: Oliver McKiernan
Band: James McCartney
Website: www.olivermckiernan.com

1 MY IPHONE

It goes without saying that the most essential piece of kit of all is my 1978 Fender P-Bass, but my iPhone is also absolutely vital. As long as I've got it with me I can't get lost or bored, both of which are hazards of touring. We use an app called Master Tour, which gets loaded with all the pertinent information by our tour manager. The group can then log in to it via phone and see all sorts of info including meeting times, how long journeys are going to be, hotel addresses and venue info. Very useful indeed.

2 RUNNING SHOES AND SWIMMING KIT

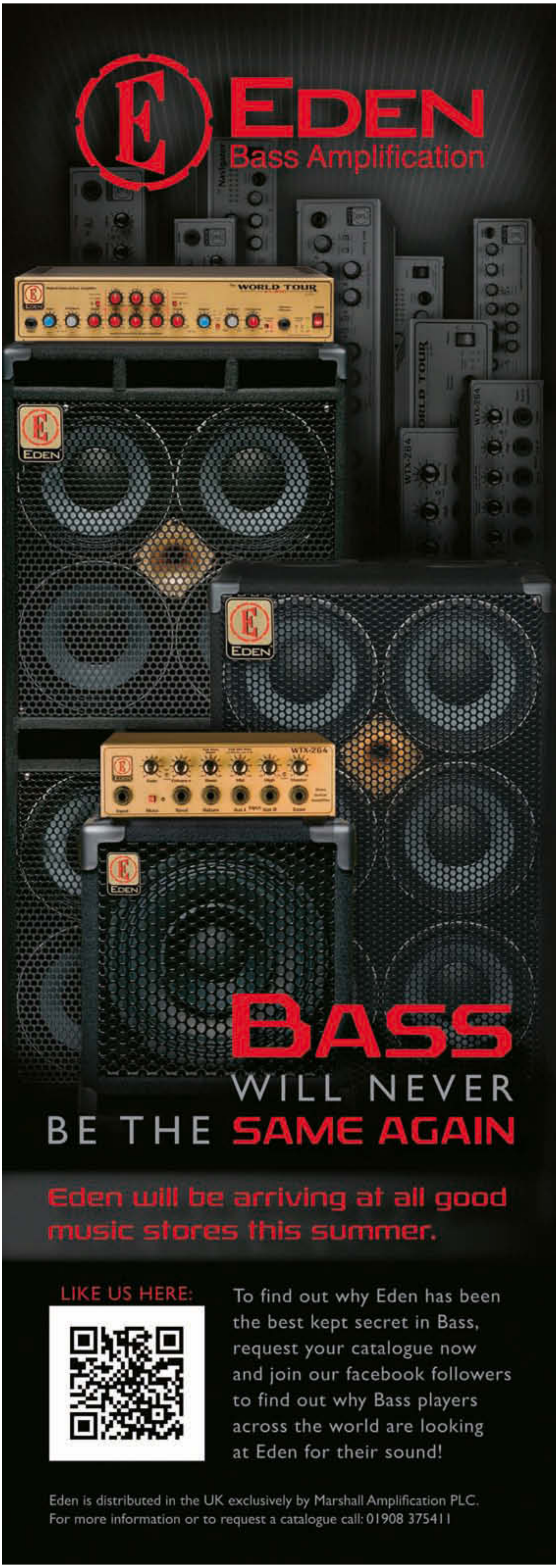
I got into endurance sport about three years ago and I run and swim almost every day when I'm at home, so carrying that on while touring is a good way of staying levelled. I don't drink, so it's my 'thing' among the group, and being able to get away for a few hours a day gives me an opportunity to think, reflect and recalibrate.

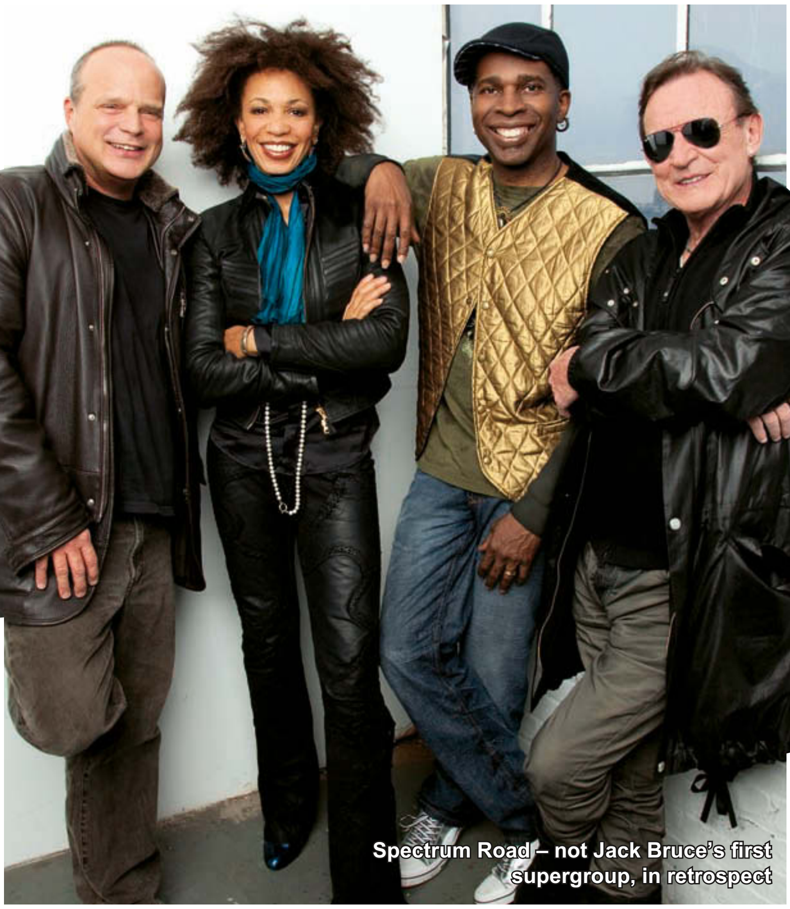
3 GOOD EARPHONES

I've had a pair of Shure SE 315s for ages now and they're great. I use them for making music on my Macbook (which would be essential number five if I was allowed one), learning new material on the road, and watching films in bed so I don't disturb my room mate. They get used every single day.

4 SNACKS

Whether you're hungry or not, stock up on bottles of water (fizzy for me) and food that will travel well. I've been caught out so many times and ended up having to eat packets of deep fried cheesy dog-salami, or something equally grim, that it's not even funny. You can never be sure when or where the next shop will be, or what will be in it, so keep some grub in your bag. Pieces of fruit are always good to have to hand and anything bread-y will keep the hunger at bay until mealtime, but steer clear of stinky sarnies that'll barely keep for a day.





Spectrum Road – not Jack Bruce's first supergroup, in retrospect

Bass in the USA

Jon D'Auria reports on Stateside bass developments

Though a little heat stroked and sun-kissed, the bass world is going strong in the summer month of July, so we'll just get right down to business to conserve energy. As far as supergroups go, we all know the drill at this point: a handful of amazing musicians from a collection of bands join forces and either find a niche for success, or fail miserably while tarnishing their past credibility. When it comes to the supergroup Spectrum Road, however, we'd most likely bet all of our money on the former. It doesn't hurt that the line-up consists of pianist John Medeski (Medeski, Martin & Wood), Living Color guitarist Vernon Reid, drummer Cindy Blackman (Lenny Kravitz, Bill Laswell) and the icing on the already decadent cake – the legendary Jack Bruce on bass. The band initially formed in 2008 as a tribute to late jazz drummer Tony Williams, but decided to reform in 2011 to tour. The quartet is back on track and has announced that their debut album will be released this spring. In the meantime, they're preparing to take to the road for a handful of summer dates which kick off at the Bonnaroo Music Festival. They'll then make their way through the Pacific northwest of the US and then head abroad for the remainder of July. The former Cream bassist and Warwick enthusiast had this to say about the band: "It started off as a tribute but entered into a band form. Obviously the starting point is Tony Williams and his Lifetime band, but now we want this group to be an entity. None of us want to force it, but we want to take the next steps as if we're a band."

Bassist Tom Hamilton and his legendary band Aerosmith have announced their Global Warming summer tour, which will send the iconic rockers on a jaunt through the US, covering most major cities. Earlier in the year, a statement was made that the band were writing new material for a new album, expected in August and titled *Music From Another Dimension*. In that dimension, Hamilton – known for the rocking grooves that he thunderously emits through his collection of Fender P-Basses – had this to say in a recent *Rolling Stone* interview: "After touring Japan and South America last year, we're psyched about bringing it all back for the hometown fans. We're going to break out the classics, the hits and maybe even some of the new ones we've been banging out in the studio." Hamilton is said to be more thrilled than ever to be touring after a bout with throat and tongue cancer in 2006. David Hull replaced Hamilton during his recovery period, but the 60-year old bassist is back and happy to be on the road. The July dates kick off in Uniondale, New York on July 1 and end the month in Houston, Texas.

Bassist Justin Meldal-Johnsen has had a busy summer – although at this point it would be more accurate to say he's had a busy decade, as the producer extraordinaire will be juggling tour dates and studio sessions through all of July. Most known for his work as the original and current bassist with Beck and the final bassist for Nine Inch Nails, Meldal-Johnsen has been in high demand for his distinct sound and amazing stage presence. In the past year he has already completed new albums playing with Beck, Garbage and Charlotte Gainsbourg and has been playing with and producing M83, Neon Trees, Sarah Barellis and now Paramore. While Beck has a few scattered dates throughout the summer, Meldal-Johnsen will focus his time on the new Paramore record, which has been highly anticipated since the band's 2009 release *Brand New Eyes*. But as far as Beck fans are concerned, don't fret: the bassist/producer explained that there is much in store in the future. "You'd think after all these years of working with Beck that it would be a breeze to step into the studio and write with him, but to be honest it seems to get harder and harder as he keeps raising the bar. I never put my guard down when I'm working with him because I know he's going to throw a curveball my way. He brings in the best musicians around, so the speed of these sessions is unreal. But I must admit that we've recorded about four albums' worth of material, so don't expect there to be just one release before we're done." Follow JMJ at www.justinmj.com

In sad news, Brooklyn music legend and Beastie Boy Adam 'MCA' Yauch passed away on May 4th, much to the dismay of bass players and fans of his music. A remarkable bassist as well as a tenacious rapper, Yauch used a diverse collection of Fender Jazz, Ampeg Electric Upright, Ampeg AEB-1 and Roland basses on jazz and funk-inspired instrumental records such as *The In Sound From Way Out* (1996) and *The Mix Up* (2007). Best known in bass terms for the distorted lines of 'Sabotage', the 47-year old passed away after a long fight with cancer. MCA will truly be missed, but his legend on the mic and the bass will undoubtedly live on. **Bass**

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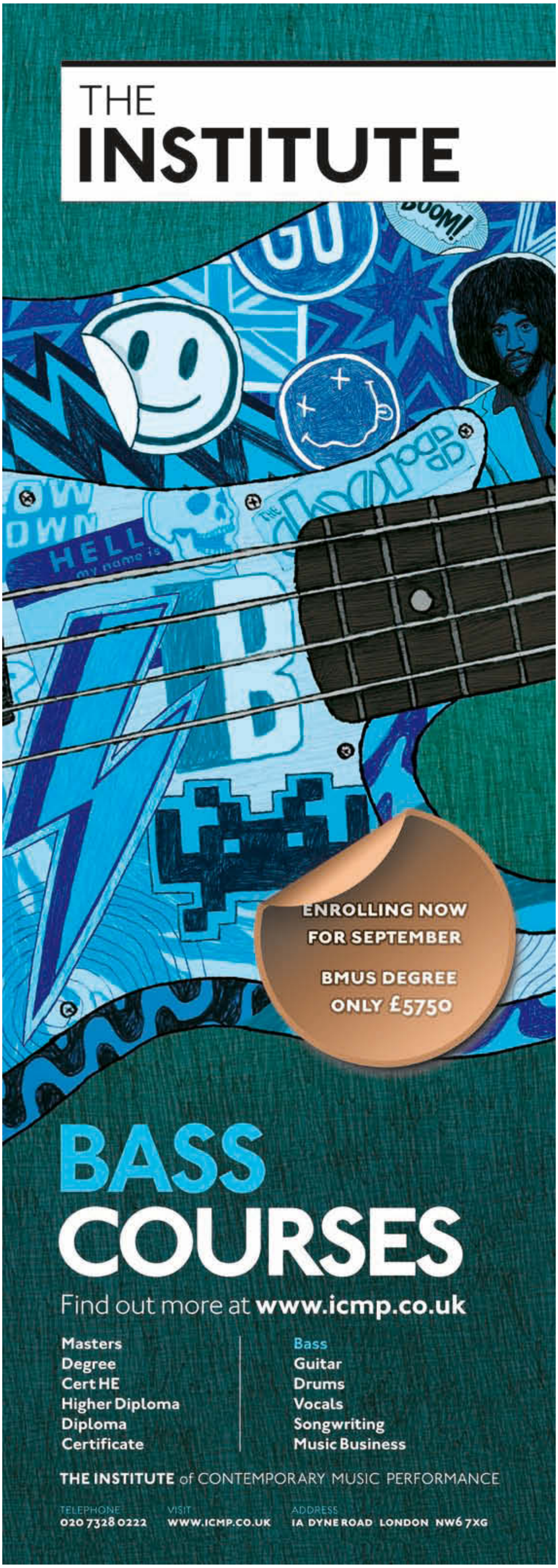

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The Bass Scholarship

With winner Ellen O'Reilly

Fáilte BGM people! Last time I spoke to you all, I was going to go to the 10th anniversary We Will Rock You show with Neil Murray – and lo and behold, I managed to get my business cards into some awesome pockets, like those of Brian May and Rufus 'son of Roger' Taylor. I met Peter Andre when I was playing on the Saturday Night Show back in Ireland and managed to give him a card, too. I even gave one to John Paul Jones at the London Bass Guitar Show, so let's hope all this cheekiness pays off.

I've certainly learned the importance of networking in these past few months. It's not all about being an amazingly technical player with all the chops in the world, it's about having the right attitude, playing appropriately and (big emphasis on this one) a great personality. If you're an easy-going, good-humoured person, you're going to be far more fun to be around, and therefore more employable than the guy who can play amazingly but can't have a laugh. Another factor is the ability to sing. Phil Mann, one of our tutors here at the Institute, told us that the busiest fixers in the business prefer bassists who can sing backing vocals. Versatility is also a valuable thing: sometimes you get a gig and what they want is… wait for it… a pick player. You've just gotta do it: after all, slapping and tapping counts for less than five per cent of what you're ever going to play, unless you happen to be Mark King.

I have an exciting summer ahead of me, with more Preacher's Son and Shannon gigs to look forward to. These require a fair bit of travelling between Ireland and England, so it's a real balancing act. RSW (Rhythm Section Workshop) has been upgraded to APW (Advanced Performance Workshop) in which we have to play complex pieces such as 'St. Jean' by Biréli Lagrène and 'Impressions' by John Coltrane. We have dedicated jazz classes where we learn standards and analyse the chord progressions and transpose them into different keys. In solo bass we study Bach, Mozart and Jaco pieces: these are tough but very rewarding. I'm also very proud to say that I am now endorsed by MarkBass as well as Musicman who I love. Happy days indeed. Slán for now!

www.lowendlady.com

BASS COLLECTION

Session bass ace Phil Spalding plays the "ROCK OF AGES" European film premiere with his "No.1" bass... The Bass Collection Power Bass - June 2012 London, England

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BassicallySpeaking

New, hot and funky bass players introduce themselves

Sara Farina, Heather Pace

The thing about session playing is that the style is set: I'm just playing what I'm told to. However, every now and then I get the treat of creating my own lines. With Heather Peace, for example, when she sent me her songs, there were no bass-lines. In that case I keep the vocal rhythm and melody in mind and write from that point. I think it's all those Bach chorales I struggled to write when I was studying… My first bass was a 1983 Westone Concord I in mint green. £100 on Gumtree – bargain! It's got an amazingly slick, fast neck but with a strap it's unbalanced and the neck dives.

The secret of playing bass well is practice and discipline. I ask myself questions like 'What does the music need? How can I develop this by changing just one thing? What kind of sounds can I get from my bass?' If the answer is 'Play the root note for two beats every two bars', then that's what I'll do, but hopefully not for an entire gig. The bass in the group has so much power, sonically, harmonically and rhythmically, and for me it's about not abusing that power. Every instrument has its role in the music: the only time things should get messy is at the afterparty! My favourite bass ever to date is my Warwick Streamer. He is called Archibald and even has his own Twitter: he's quite a character. I can dial up any tone I need on stage and in the studio, it's very flexible. People say that short-scale basses have flabby bottoms, but not my Warwicks – I tune down to D quite a lot and it's no problem. That's why I chose Warwick: they have a really defined sound and the humbuckers are amazing. My bass heroes are the Youtube bass players and teachers. If you're reading, thank you so much for all your generosity, energy, love and passion for the bass. Such an amazing resource for learning and source of inspiration. I've learnt so much from so many of you. As a singing bass player, I have to go with those who sing and play as they inspire me to work harder. Esperanza Spalding, Tina Weymouth, Sting, Mark King, Richard Bona, Sir Paul McCartney. It's a whole different game. Big respect. Finally, I got my first professional tour – a big one, on three continents – and an endorsement with Warwick after playing the bass for only one and a half years. If I can do it, anyone can!

www.scarpi.co.uk

GEAR

Bass Warwick Custom Shop Streamer $$ (passive) and Corvette $$ (active/passive)
Effects Various, depending on gig
Amp Ditto

Martin Stacey, Bermondsey Joyriders

I would describe my bass style as a dirty cloud of thunder, looming over an otherwise bright blue sky on a bank holiday Monday. I do not play five- or six-string bass, because it's not punk and it's not rock'n'roll. I do not slap – see above. The secret of playing bass well is being able to look cooler than all the other band-members, especially the frontman. As The Bermondsey Joyriders are fronted by Gary Lammin, my job is pretty easy, I believe. My first bass was a Framus four-string, bought for £15, which was more than some people paid for a car in 1970. My favourite basses ever to date are my Dan Armstrong plexiglass, Burns Bison, Vox Phantom Dan Electro Longhorn, 'Box' and 'Phantom' basses and my Gibson Thunderbird. Anything not 'normal' – it's got to have a difference. My bass hero is Bill Wyman. Standing like a statue, wearing alien bugeye sunglasses. The business! The greatest bass player that ever lived? It's an impossible question to answer: at different times different players mean different things to me. Captain Sensible for 'Neat, Neat, Neat', Bill Wyman for his various moves on 'Jumpin' Jack Flash', 'Street Fighting Man' and so on, Jack Bruce with Cream. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose Humble Pie's *Performance: Rockin' The Fillmore*. You can hear how the years of hard playing and touring make a band gel. It's called *Performance* for a reason, one you can hear any time you chose to put it on the turntable. Don't play this album on CD: buy the vinyl!

www.bermondseyjoyriders.co.uk

GEAR

Bass Home-made, re-modelled square 'Bo Diddley' style box bass and 'Phantom' bass
Effects None
Amp Ampeg SVT CL head, 8x10 cab

Rob Bayley, Hopeless Heroic

I would describe my bass style as solid and groovy. My bass heroes are Cliff Burton, Bootsy Collins, Tim Commerford, Mike Balzary and Fat Mike Burkett. The greatest bass player that ever lived was Cliff Burton of Metallica: that dude had speedy fingers and just seemed like an all-round lovely bloke. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I'd go with Billy Talent's first album: the tone mix between bass and guitar is phenomenal and, seeing as the rhythm section is the most important part of any band, the bass tone gets mad props.

I don't play five- or six-string bass, because I can only count to four and because it gives our guitarist Scott a massive complex – in that awkward 'my strings are bigger than his' kind of way… but I do use a Boss Bass EQ and Boss Bass Chorus CE 2B. The latter pedal has the perfect rate to depth ratio in my opinion. The secret of playing bass well is listening to your drummer and sticking into that rhythm section pocket of love.

© Trash Iraundegi

My first bass was not branded: it was black and was a short-scale bass. If I remember correctly, my old man got it from this beat-up pawnshop as I kept banging on about wanting to learn the bass. It was a great little piece of kit, although my favourite bass ever to date is my Fender Aerodyne Jazz. My band Hopeless Heroic are currently doing a 200-date tour of the UK and Europe promoting our new record *Become The Monster*, which came out in May. We're living the dream, kicking ass, taking names and changing lives every day!

www.hopelessheroic.com

GEAR

Bass Fender Aerodyne Jazz, Fender Precision
Effects Boss Bass EQ, Boss Bass Chorus CE 2B
Amp Marshall MB410 Bass Combo

Keith Lowe, Brad

My bass style? Let's see if I can manage not to sound too pompous with this one. In a perfect world I would strive to be tuneful, solid, and supportive while adding weight, strength, and propulsion with a hint of melody. I'm really a lover of four-string basses. I got a five-string fretless when I played with David Sylvian, as he really loves the low notes. I enjoyed the range, but it felt very odd to my hands and ears. On my last tour with him I used a four-string and brought along my whammy pedal for the extra-low notes. I'm not much of a slapper, although I do my own humble version of it… mostly for the tone rather than the rhythmic qualities. Brad has a tune called '20th Century' off their first album *Shame*, which is a slap-based loop. That's a really fun one to play although very challenging to keep up for long! When I was 12 I wanted a blue Rickenbacker, but my teacher thought Rics were too big for my small hands. He recommended a Gibson Les Paul bass, and that's what my parents bought me. I still have it to this day. I used it a lot on the first Fiona Apple tour. Sounds big, really comfortable neck, but ungodly heavy! I fall in and out of love with different basses, but I think my Jerry Jones Long Horn is my favourite of all time. Comfortable short scale, mercifully light, deep tone, and it looks weird to boot. My bass heroes? John Paul Jones was my first. Solid, heavy, fluid, melodic. I love Phil Lesh for being so odd and different. Of course Jaco Pastorius for the groove/shred/tone, and Paul McCartney for his tone/melodic/compositional sensibilities. Joey Spampinato of NRBQ is always a favorite. Great lines and amazing upright tone out of his electric bass. Can't not mention James Jamerson! One last mention would be Fred Chalenor from Portland, Oregon. He's an amazing musician and was a big influence on my playing. Very strong, yet liquid.

www.keithlowe.net, www.bradcorporation.com

GEAR

Bass Jerry Jones Long Horn, Jerry Jones 6 string Tic Tac Long Horn, Gibson Les Paul Triumph, Rickenbacker V63, Hofner Club, Hagstrom 8 string, Epiphone Jack Casady, Alembic, Gotz German upright, NS Design electric upright, 'Frankenstein' Precision
Effects Wooly Mammoth distortion, Digitech whammy pedal, MXR Phase 90, Sansamp GT2, Eventide Space and Time Factor pedals, Boss RC 30 Loop Station
Amp Ashdown ABM 500, Bag End 15" cabs, Ampeg SVT with 8x10" or 6x10" cabs, Acoustic Image

In the Groove

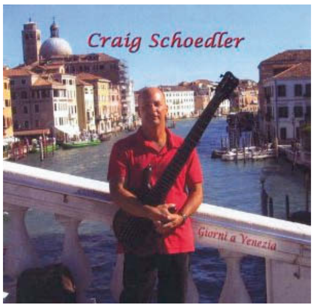
Music and more from the bass world, reviewed and rated by Mike Flynn and Ben Cooper

Incognito

Surreal

Music ★★★ Playing ★★★★

Incognito have clocked up more than 30 years as one of the UK's longest-running and most successful jazz-funk bands, and yet there's a new spark of life fuelling Jean-Paul 'Bluey' Maunick's group today. For anyone who caught them at Ronnie Scott's recently, the roots of this rebirth were plain to see, with Maunick surrounded by a superb band and running through a bulging back catalogue of songs revamped for the 21st century. Admittedly theirs is not a mould-breaking, genre-smashing style, but what they do possess in spades is old-school class, deep grooves and sky-high musicianship. All of this is reflected on *Surreal*, which packs a punch with melody-laden songs and extended instrumentals. It's to Maunick's credit that the hooky opener, 'The Less You Know', combines a sultry top-line vocal with a clever interlocking guitar and bass riff, with some nifty horn parts in between. Bassist Francis Hylton gets to strut his funky stuff throughout, delivering a slap-bass breakdown on the first cut and laying down impeccably smooth bass-lines through the rest of the set. His partner-in-crime, drummer Pete Ray Biggin – who is very much a star of the live show – also plays immaculately, contributing the snappy 'This Must be Love', with its cool stop-start bass groove and a popping funk feel. It's a fine album overall, but if there's one caveat, it is that things would have sounded even sweeter if some of the sweat and raw energy from the live show had made it onto tape here – but that's why you have to see these guys live. **[MF]**



Craig Schoedler

Giorni A Venezia

Music ★★★ Playing ★★★★

This latest effort from American bassist Craig Schoedler sees him performing totally solo on six-string bass. While this may be enough to send some of you screaming in terror, give Craig a chance. Thanks to no small talent with composition and melody, Schoedler steers clear of the kind of indulgent wank-fest that these albums can often become. Each track is inspired by some element of Venice (hence the English translation of the album title: Venetian Days), and each track reflects imagery conjured by its title. The smooth melody of the title track is perfect relaxing music, as Schoedler manages to keep his fine technique constantly in service to the song. There are some quick runs, but most of the time he's playing with motifs and themes, giving variations on them to keep the ear hooked. 'Gelato Con Due Palle' ('Ice Cream With Two Scoops'), evokes a relaxing afternoon in the sun, with its light and airy main theme. Elsewhere, 'Acqua Sotto Il Ponte' ('Water Under The Bridge'), features a pulsing bass-line over which Craig lays down some bubbling and bluesy licks, showcasing his ability to capture the mood implied by the song's title.

Don't get me wrong: if this kind of instrumental solo bass workout isn't your thing, then *Giorni A Venezia* isn't going to win you over. I'm not a big fan of this kind of material, but I found it a pleasant and interesting album, which I've spun a few times. If you're into solo bass, then you owe it to yourself to at least give this album a try. **[BC]**

Avishai Cohen & Nitai Hershkovits

Duende

Music ★★★★ Playing ★★★★

Emerging in the late 1990s via Chick Corea's band, Origin, and a series of acclaimed solo albums, Israeli-born Avishai Cohen is one of the great modern jazz bassists of our time. He's also one of those rare, mercurial forces of nature, which come on like a one-man bass hurricane when he hits the high gears. Cohen's elemental approach rams home just how deeply he feels and writes music; he's a man with a symbiotic relationship to his bass and the music simply pours out of him. Which is why *Duende*, his third album for legendary jazz label Blue Note, is another change of tack from both previous works Aurora and Seven Seas. Gone are the haunting Hebrew vocals and extended, through-composed pieces: instead, this is a tight-but-loose duo between the bassist and pianist Nitai Hershkovits, a fellow Israeli and just 24 years old at the time of this recording. Hershkovits's presence here is explained by Cohen's habit of discovering young stars, such as drummers Amir Bresler and Mark Guiliana. It's his canny instinct and undeniable connection with Nitai that fuels this album's dynamism. The bassist's intricate composing style gets a look-in, but takes a back seat to some wonderful stretches of improvisation on three jazz standards. These include a gorgeously dark take on John Coltrane's 'Central Park West' and a head-bobbing remake of Thelonious Monk's 'Criss Cross'. Proving himself one of the most multi-faceted musicians of our time, Cohen reveals a softer, warmer side to his music here, and introduces the stunning piano work of Hershkovits in the most emphatic style. At just over half an hour in length, this is a short but perfectly formed statement from a modern master and his latest protégé. **[MF]**

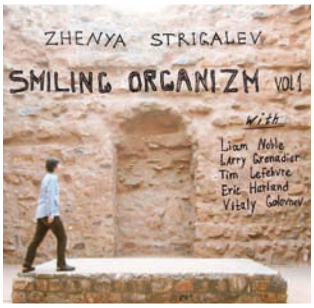
Thomonic

2011 Solo With Myself

Music ★ Playing ★★★

Thomonic is the pseudonym for German musicologist Nico Thom who, when he's not teaching musicology, records music in his home studio. This is intended to be the first in a series of recordings where Thomonic takes his six-string bass guitar and collaborates with other players to create "unusual constellations of music". However, this first EP sees him recording alone, multi-tracking his bass and playing melody and rhythm parts.

The guy can play, but the music sounds and feels exactly as you would expect: technically proficient, and wilfully "unusual", but ultimately not that captivating. The opening track, 'Living In Eisenbach', features some nice chord work, and wouldn't sound too bad on a short film soundtrack. In its way it's quite atmospheric, and doesn't outstay its welcome at less than two minutes long. However, 'Seeing New York Again', with its discordant parts and repetitive thumbed riff has little to capture the imagination. 'Travelling To Tokyo' is little better, becoming almost comical in places with its odd distorted lead line, while 'Dreaming Of Rio' reminded me of the music for the Commodore 64 games I adored so much as a child (which is perhaps why I gave it a second spin). Hopefully, once Thomonic starts recording with other musicians the compositions will be stronger, and the next release will be a little more focused. We can but hope. **[BC]**



Zhenya Strigalev

Smiling Organizm

Music ★★★★ Playing ★★★★

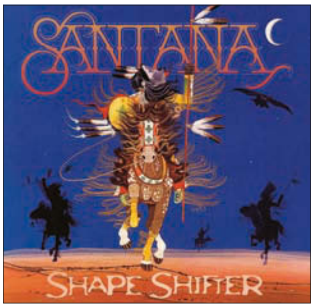
Alto saxophonist Strigalev has been forging a distinct style that brings together vibrant, bebop-fuelled phraseology with his own daredevil approach to harmony and rhythm. Strigalev spent an extended period of time in the Big Apple in 2011, working with contacts established while co-curating jazz nights at Charlie Wright's. Among these were bassists Tim Lefebvre (Rudder) and Larry Grenadier (Brad Mehldau Trio/Fly) and drum star Eric Harland (Dave Holland's group), who all appear on *Smiling Organizm*, Strigalev's fifth and best album to date. British pianist Liam Noble and Russian trumpeter Vitaly Golovnev complete the talented band, on a set that effortlessly blends old and new jazz sounds via gritty fusion, sly funk and avant swing. 'Fletcher' is a sprightly post-bop opening gambit, while Lefebvre's slippery sub-reggae bass-line on 'Anchovies' is the perfect counterpoint voice to one of the album's standout hooks. There's some unhinged, yet intelligent, improve too, with Lefebvre slapping on a synth pedal while Strigalev and Harland go at it hammer and tongs. Held together by sheer bravura, raw energy and no shortage of well-placed virtuosity, Strigalev and his band whip up a delightfully free-flowing musical storm. **[MF]**

Devin Townsend Project

By A Thread: Live In London 2011

Music ★★★★★ Playing ★★★

Devin Townsend is something of a musical phenomenon. From his early breakthrough as a singer on Steve Vai's *Sex & Religion* album in 1993, he formed the extreme metal band Strapping Young Lad, as well as releasing numerous solo albums. His albums cover a variety of styles outside his metal roots. This nine-disc set is another example of Townsend doing something that bit different for his fanbase. It features four DVDs and five CDs, all of which document the mammoth undertaking of his band performing the albums *Ki, Addicted, Deconstruction* and *Ghost* (the fifth CD features encore performances). Bass duties are handled by Brian Waddell, Jean Savoie and Mike Young on *Ki*, while *Addicted* features only Waddell. Jean Savoie covers the bass on *Ghost* and Mike Young handles *Deconstruction.* As anyone who is familiar with Townsend's music will know, the bass isn't a featured instrument in his music: Townsend's output is all about the whole. That's not to say that the bass playing isn't good, because it is, with all three players serving up slabs of tight and at times atmospheric playing. What's even more amazing is that all three bassists played most of the songs live for the first time at the gigs.. If you're looking for Marcus Miller-style bass chops then you'll have to look elsewhere, but if you want to take in some of the best rock and metal music around, played by a fabulous band, then look no further. **[BC]**



Santana

Shape Shifter

Music ★★ Playing ★★

Guitarist Carlos Santana has enjoyed more than his fair share of critical and commercial success since his eponymous band first emerged in the late 1960s with one of the epoch-defining live performances at Woodstock. That show was the catalyst for a career that has spanned four decades, 100 million album sales and live performances to a similar number of concertgoers, and now qualifies Santana as an official 'living legend'. Yet that also leaves him in the somewhat tricky artistic position of either repeating past glories or pushing the boundaries once again, as he so successfully did with his smash 1999 album *Supernatural.* Thus Shape Shifter finds the axeman opting for a somewhat half-baked amalgam of the two on this, his 36th album to date, and his first on his new Starfaith label imprint. The set is dedicated to native Americans and the muscular band give it all their worth, with drum demon Dennis Chambers and former Miles Davis bassist Benny Rietveld laying down the Latin, funk and rock law with utter professionalism, if little flair. Yet with only one vocal track among the 13 here – the enjoyable 'Eres La Luz', featuring Andy Vargas and Tony Lindsay – *Shape Shifter* doesn't really live up to its title as Carlos blasts his way through a set of stodgy Latin-rock. He's still got the chops, but is sadly lacking in ideas. **[MF]**

Branford Marsalis Quartet

Four MFs Playin' Tunes

Music ★★★★ Playing ★★★★

As we drift further into a new century of music, things now really boil down to the attitude with which they are played and the directness of the melodies therein. For a style as inherently loaded with the sound of its own history as acoustic bebop-based jazz to remain relevant today these fundamental provisos apply, but only more so. Who better to give this much maligned, and often lazily regurgitated, style a much-needed kick in the pants than the ferociously gifted saxophonist Branford Marsalis? Having made a name for himself as a star sideman for Sting circa the latter's jazz-inspired Dream Of The Blue Turtles from 1985, plus sessions with Miles Davis and his own band Buckshot LeFonque, Branford has been something of an evangelist for no-nonsense acoustic bop for over a decade now. Which brings us to the cheekily-titled *Four MFs Playin' Tunes*, a blistering set that squarely focuses on melody and relies on the deep empathy between his long standing cohorts. Yes, this is unapologetic acoustic jazz, with newest band member Justin Faulkner giving a masterclass in modern post-bop drumming, pianist Joey Calderazzo flying around the piano and bassist Eric Revis digging deep into the depths of each tune. However, it is Branford's burning solos on the album's standout tune 'Whiplash' [not the Metallica song – Ed.] and his eloquent and refined clarinet on the closing 'My Deal' which make this an essential album. **[MF]**

Asia

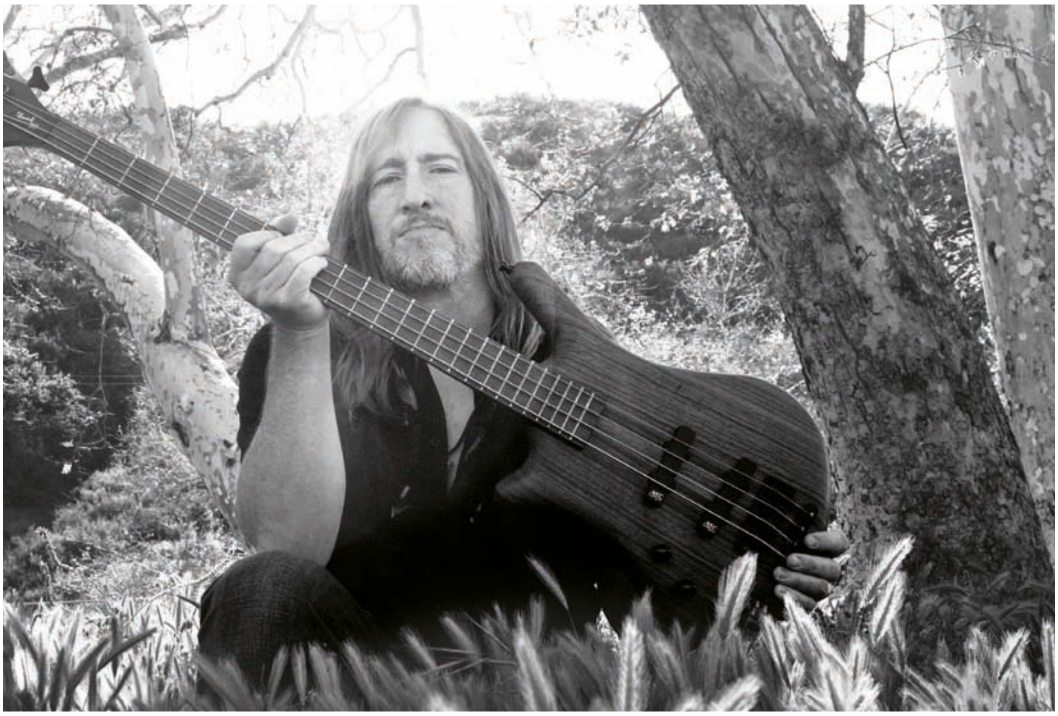
XXX

Music ★★★ Playing ★★★★

Ah, Asia. It's hard to think of a band that better sums up the AOR sound of the 80s. Although they were often mocked and parodied (albeit in an admittedly affectionate manner: think Eric Cartman's rendition of 'Heat Of The Moment', and that framed poster in The 40 Year Old Virgin), Asia's hooky, synth-laden rock was huge in the States during the early 80s. A series of line-up changes and the shifting fads of music meant that they never recaptured that success, but this latest release should please fans of the band. The album opener 'Tomorrow The World' has a trademark synth riff and chugging guitars and bass. 'Bury Me In Willow', with its big piano riff and galloping rhythm, has '80s montage ballad' written all over it. The mid-tempo rocker 'No Religion' has John Wetton's signature gritty pick tones driving it all along, and it's on this track and 'Face On The Bridge' that the old boys really start to shine. Throughout the album Wetton keeps his playing tight, always serving the song, but it's really his vocals that steal the show. The man's still got one of the finest rock voices, even after all these years. There's nothing groundbreaking here, but then should you expect that? What you've got is a group of fine elder statesmen, having a ball creating a record for their fans (right down to the corny artwork), so if you count yourself among them, then snap this up now. **[BC]**

TakeFive

Kyuss alumnus Scott Reeder reveals five albums that shaped his style



Scott Reeder

Scott Reeder is a legend among fans of rock bass for his extravagant, melodic lines. Since his time in desert rock pioneers Kyuss, with whom he recorded the all-time classic album *Welcome To Sky Valley*, he has laid down the bass grooves with seminal bands such as The Obsessed, Goatsnake, Unida and many others. Sit back and listen as the great man picks five albums that influenced him…

The Beatles

Revolver (1966)

At Christmas, when I was five, my parents bought me two albums. One was the Sesame Street record and another was *Revolver* by The Beatles. I wanted to be a drummer at that point, so I listened to the interplay between the kit and the bass. At that age I thought all albums were as good as this! And then I grew up and realised that it was one of the best LPs of all time. My favourite song on it is 'Tomorrow Never Knows', but there are so many points on the album where Paul McCartney's harmonic awareness shines through.

TSOL

Dance With Me (1981)

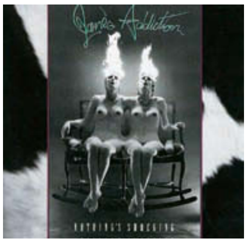
When I was 15 I switched from drums to bass and I was playing in a punk band. I was playing along with a lot of records and got really into TSOL. Mike Roche's bass lines stood out because they were really melodic and creative, and also contained a lot of chords. The album really stood out from a lot of the other punk rock stuff. I guess I was into Rickenbackers back then. My first bass was a Ricky copy. Anyway, TSOL were kinda goth-punk, I suppose. They were a big influence on me and they played amazing shows.

The Damned

The Black Album (1980)

I suppose you could say I'm staying in the same sort of area as TSOL, but I was also really into The Damned, and especially this album. The Damned's bass player was a guy called Paul Gray, and the aggression and energy in his playing was so beautiful. What made it so cool was that he played really melodic runs, but there was this high energy in his approach that got your blood pumping.

I loved that record so much. I used to get high and listen to the whole LP from start to finish through headphones.



Jane's Addiction

Nothing's Shocking (1988)

The album after this, *Ritual De Lo Habitual* (1990) was a great record too, but I remember exactly where I was the first time I heard *Nothing's Shocking*. I was at a recording studio, and it was playing through these huge monitors. I was like, 'holy shit!' The bass lines are really different and creative, and the interplay between the drums and the bass is untouchable. Eric Avery was one of the best. I never got into the stuff that Jane's Addiction did without him. I didn't give it a chance, I guess, because I was so into his playing.

Nirvana

Nevermind (1991)

I'm gonna go out on a limb here and say Nirvana. The songwriting is incredible, you've got one of the best drummers the world has ever seen, and Krist Novoselic's bass parts were incredible. Those little runs and melodic lines that he did were amazing. He goes way beyond just supporting the song. I think his playing is brilliant on this album. The first time I met him was when Nirvana played the Roxy and I was doing sound. Later we found out that he and I have the same birthday, and that we were born a few miles apart. It was a trip.

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BLAH

LIKE CLOCKWORK

Like everything to do with Rush, getting ready to take the band on the road takes time, planning, and lots of meetings. When we meet the Canadian trio's legendary frontman Geddy Lee, he is due for the next in a series of two-hour sit-downs with his keyboard tech to work out the finer points of conveying the band's newest output, and some old favourites, to the waiting masses around the world.

It's been five years since Rush released a full album, but that's not to say that they've been idle: a large chunk of that time has been spent touring and writing the new album. "We're always excited to go into the studio and it's something we always look forward to," says Geddy. "The writing process for a new record is probably the most rewarding aspect of what we do, aside from having a really good gig."

The secret of longevity in this business is the development of your band's style, musical approach, and technical skill. For a bassist as technically gifted as Geddy, it's no surprise at all that he embraces the notion of development. "I always have an idea of a new place I want to reach, either sonically, technically, or both, trying to improve on where I was last time," he tells us. "It's a funny thing, but when you've been around as long as us, you sometimes end up in a place that you forgot you were in 20 years ago! I listen back to the last couple of albums and think that I maybe want to move on soundwise, maybe get a little more aggressive in this area or that, and then I listen to what I'm doing and think, hmm, that was the way I was playing around 1981. In a long career, you sometimes forget your own past, and maybe that's a blessing.

"What I'm doing at the start of a new record is to fine-tune this thing called my sound. I want to have it big and bold, but at the same time, I don't want to dominate the whole track. What helped us this time was that we made a conscious decision to limit the number of overdubs we were going to put on the album, to retain a bit more clarity. With [Rush's 2007 album] *Snakes And Arrows*, although we love the record and we love the songs on it, we felt that we overdid the overdubs and made the record a little dense. The sound that I have is the result of the experiments that we try out on the road. I experiment

“

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with my sound in what amounts to a live experiment room, namely the venues in which we play. We tour a whole bunch of different venues that are all fraught with their own audio issues. I aim for an on-stage sound that makes me feel like I'm filling the bottom end of the room, and yet I'm looking for the definition that sometimes it's hard to push through in an echo-y arena. So I take that sound that I've developed live, apply it to our writing, and see what suits the particular style of what we're writing. It's usually a matter of fine-tuning, which goes on in the earlier parts of the tour. It's not broad strokes; it's really a tweak here and there."

This represents a technical challenge, Geddy adds: "I run so many lines out to my front-of-house sound mixer, Brad, that he has a lot of options. I have four lines going out, and Brad will mix and match to get an interesting sound each night. I know that both he and my monitor guy take my DI sound and they put their own modelling on it. They can even take my sound, ignore it, and re-model their own sound and then feed that back to me, which puts an interesting spin on things."

But does that mean that in addition to manning the bass, adding in live and programmed keyboard sequences, and singing lead vocals, Geddy also has to have an ear on a particularly tasty sound mix, and memorise it for the next show? Fortunately not. Step forward Geddy's right-hand man, bass tech John McIntosh. "John remembers everything!" confirms Geddy with a wide grin. "He keeps track of all the settings that we use, so he has all that information. He can find the settings for a particular piece that I liked and remembered, and he'll be able to set it up again for me. John's a great guy; he's totally inside the instrument. This year we did some experiments with pickups. We have a technician who winds pickups for us, so John set up four very similar basses with four different sets of pickups, but with the amps and speakers set the same way. That way we could analyse just the effect of each set of pickups on the sound. It was really interesting."

Although Rush have spent decades pioneering new ways of making cutting-edge rock music, Geddy is not always keen to abandon his tried and trusted bass sounds in favour of new and untested possibilities. He explains, "As a player, when I find a sound I like, I tend to stick with it, and just leave it. I don't want to mess with it, once I've got to a place I like – but John is really good, he's always throwing different options at me, which is stimulating. It's good for me. During our downtime, John got the sound of these different pickups, made me a CD of each of them and sent it to me. I wasn't too interested in thinking about my bass sound when I was on holiday, but as soon as I got back to work, I was keen to hear what he had done, and it worked out well, because although my main bass remains largely unchanged, what we did was use some of the different basses on three or four tracks of the album, just to utilise different pickup sounds."

In keeping with this conservative approach to his sound, Geddy is equally reluctant to work with new bass guitar designs. As with all top-line musicians, Geddy is constantly offered new and exciting basses to try, but he remains faithful to his Fender Jazz. "I've always loved the way it sounds, and the way it feels," he says. "It's exactly the right bass for me. The manufacturers know that I'm a Fender man, but they still send basses to me, and some of them are beautiful instruments and I like them, so I do try and find a way to use them – but the sound I want on record is still that Fender Jazz sound."

He adds: "It's funny because when I started out, my identifiable sound was the Rickenbacker, and I played that for many years. I think it was on the *Moving Pictures* album [1981] that I started adding in the Fender. I used it on 'Tom Sawyer' and a

couple of other songs, and most people just assumed it was the Ricky. Then I went away from it for a while and started experimenting with all kinds of different basses, like Steinbergers and Wals, which were all good instruments in their own right, and suited where my head was at sonically at that time. Then around the time of recording the *Counterparts* album [1993], I decided that I wanted a ballsier, deeper sound, a more rock sound, and that's when I returned to my 1972 Fender. I haven't really looked back from there. It's become a part of me."

The phrase 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it' comes to mind, we tell him. "I think you're right, although around that time I started trying out the Steinberger because it was drastically different to the Rickenbacker. The Rickenbacker was a very heavy, unwieldy bass to play live. I was playing a lot of keyboards on stage then, and I was going back and forth sometimes three or four times in one song, keys to bass and bass to keys. So I thought I'd try the Steinberger because it has no headstock, and it's a shrimpy little thing, a lot lighter. I figured that if I could get the sound I wanted out of it, it would be a lot easier standing surrounded by all this technology with far less risk of knocking a mic stand over or hitting something as I moved around. So I tried it, but ultimately the sound was not satisfying to me.

"I then started working with Peter Collins in Britain, and he owned a Wal bass, and the only other person I knew of at that time who played a Wal was Percy Jones of Brand X and I'm a big fan of his playing. I started using it, and the Wal had quite a sharp sound, it cut through things quite nicely and brought a funkier sound to my playing. This was the time when I was experimenting quite a lot. I was making the transition from a grinder, a fast-licks kinda guy, to someone with a more funky edge and a rhythmic approach. I had a relationship with Wal and they made some fantastic instruments for me, and that ran for a couple of albums and a couple of tours, and that's when I made the move back to Fender. It was when we decided to get back to being a three-piece rock band again. I have quite a few Jazz basses in different styles, and I rotate four or five of those with different tones in each. I still have my old Rickys and I pull them out now and again for fun."

One song, 'The Anarchist', from Rush's new album *Clockwork Angels*, demonstrates that whatever else Geddy does when writing his bass parts, taking the easy option is simply not up for consideration. Part of his ethos is making each song sound as exciting as he can make it. "I go for that excitement without necessarily thinking too much about how I will deal with it in terms of reproducing it on stage," he says. "When it comes to rehearsals for the tour, I'm going to have my hands full learning that bass part, and also the vocals that go with it. I always want the best bass lines I can get for any song. Any one of us may write a simpler part initially, and then I'll want to make it more aggressive, or more interesting, or Nick [Raskulinecz, co-producer] will come to me and say, 'That's a great bass part, but it doesn't really add another dimension to the sound of the song'."

As for effects, Geddy is happy to leave them in the hands of his faithful tech. "John is a major

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Fender

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7944 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz Bass, Black
9084 - Fender American Special Jazz Bass, CAR
9083 - Fender Am Special Jazz Bass, Sunburst
8431 - Fender USA Standard Jazz Bass in Black
7943 - Fender Am Stan Precision Bass, Sunburst
8927 - Fender Geddy Lee Jazz Bass in Sunburst
7076 - Fender Highway One Precision, Wine
8928 - Fender Marcus Miller Jazz Bass, Sunburst
8177 - Fender Modern Player Jaguar Bass, Black
8113 - Fender Modern Player Available To Order
8929 - Fender Roger Waters Precision Bass
4749 - Fender Standard Precision, Candy Red
8287 - Fender Standard Jazz Bass, Brown S.burst
5572 - Fender Standard Precision, Arctic White
5190 - FleaBass The Wild One Junior, Black
9138 - G&L L2000 Tribute Bass, 3-Tone Sunburst

LEVIN

4999 - Levin LB100J, Antique Sunburst
6640 - Levin LB200, Cherry Sunburst
6781 - Levin LB200, Cherry Sunburst
6780 - Levin LB400, Redburst

Lodestone

8073 - Lodestone Primal Artist
8075 - Lodestone Primal Instinct J Bass, Green
8076 - Lodestone Primal Instinct J Bass, Sburst
8079 - Lodestone Primal Instinct P Bass, Green
8080 - Lodestone Primal Instinct Pbass Sunburst
8078 - Lodestone Primal Instinct P Bass, Cream
8081 - Lodestone Primal Pro in Chignal Blue
8083 - Lodestone Primal Pro, Rodings White
8082 - Lodestone Primal Pro 4, Tobacco Sunburst

MUSICMAN

7930 - MusicMan Sterling 4 String Bass in Red
4703 - MusicMan Stingray 2EQ, Blue Pearl
4781 - MusicMan Stingray 3EQ, True Gold
7923 - Musicman Gilded White Classic Stingray 4
8997 - Musicman Sterling SB14 Bass, Sunburs

Overwater

4253 - Overwater Aspiration Artist, Trans Red
4250 - Overwater Aspiration Deluxe 4, Amber
9060 - Overwater Aspiration Elite, Zebrano
9059 - Overwater Aspiration Elite, Wenge Top
8435 - Overwater Aspiration Std 4, Black Cherry
9061 - Overwater Classic Jazz, Candy Apple Red
7849 - Overwater Contemporary Jazz, Trans Blue
8198 - Overwater J Series Deluxe 4, Sunburst
4355 - Overwater UK Perception, Natural
5954 - Peavey Cirrus Series BXP, Redwood
6909 - Rickenbacker 4001C64, Maplego
6919 - Rickenbacker 4003, Maplego

RockBass

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5309 - Rockbass Streamer Standard, Blue Stain
9044 - Sandberg Panther 4 String Bass, Pre-Owned

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7204 - Squier Classic Vibe Precision 50s Blonde
7260 - Squier P Bass Std Sp Lefty Antique Burst
4615 - Squier Vintage Modified Jazz 77, Black
9095 - Squier Vintage Mod. Jaguar Special HB
7922 - Ventures VMB75 Bass Guitar, Candy Apple
8436 - Warwick Thumb Bass 4 Bolt on in Natural
8229 - Washburn WB66 Idol 4 String in Trans Red

WestCoast

8954 - Westcoast BG1 4 String Bass Candy Apple Red
8569 - Westcoast BG1 Bass Guitar
6447 - Westcoast BG2, Natural or Trans Red
6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8438 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Black
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

8157 - Yamaha BB1024X in Vintage White
4649 - Yamaha BB2024X, Vintage White
9006 - Yamaha BB424X 4 String Bass
9000 - Yamaha RBX170
4331 - Yamaha TRB1004J, Trans Black

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4178 - Marleaux Votan Deluxe 5, Blue Jeans
5723 - Marleaux Consat Custom 6, Natural

MUSICMAN

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7923 - Musicman Gilded White Classic Stingray 4

Overwater

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9009 - Overwater Contemporary 5-String Bass
7259 - Overwater Perception Std 5, Bubinga
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
8213 - Spector NS2000 5 String Bass, Blue
6448 - Westcoast JB5, Sunburst or Amber

YAMAHA

8275 - Yamaha BB425X, Vintage White
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
9005 - Yamaha TRB1006J 6 String Bass

Acoustic Basses

Breedlove

7479 - Breedlove JB350 CR4, Electro 4, Blonde
8301 - Breedlove Electro Acoustic Bass Natural
8687 - Breedlove Passport Plus B350/CB4

LEVIN

5393 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Black
5394 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Natural
5392 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
6782 - Levin LB100 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
7301 - Ovation USA Elite, Electro 4, Natural USA

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4942 - AER Amp Two (240W, 1x12)

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4388 - Ashdown 220 Touring 115 (220W, 1x15)
4385 - Ashdown 330 Touring 115H (300W, 1x15)
4386 - Ashdown 330 Touring 210H (307W, 2x10)
4382 - Ashdown 550 Touring (550W, 1x15)
5066 - Ashdown 550 Touring Hybrid (550W, 2x10)
6759 - Ashdown ABM C115 500 Evo 3 (575w, 1x15)
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8714 - Ashdown After Eight 20 Bass Combo
5667 - Ashdown After Eight (15W, 1x8)
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8757 - Ashdown Electric Blue 12 220
8758 - Ashdown Electric Blue EB15 220
5669 - Ashdown EB180 12 Evo2 (180W, 1x12)
5668 - Ashdown EB180 15 Evo2 (180W, 1x15)
5665 - Ashdown Five Fifteen (100W, 1x15)
8751 - Ashdown Five Fifteen ABM100 Bass Combo
8753 - Ashdown Five Fifteen Mini Rig 100
4397 - Ashdown LB30 Drophead 115H (30W, 1x15)
6454 - Ashdown MAG C115-300 Evo2 (300W, 1x15)
6453 - Ashdown MAG C410T-300 Evo 2 (300W, 3x10)
8718 - Ashdown Mag C115 300 Evo III Bass Combo
8722 - Ashdown Mag C210T 300 Evo III Bass Combo
8720 - Ashdown Mag C210T 300 Bass Combo
8727 - Ashdown Mag C410T 600 Evo III
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten 40 Bass Combo
5666 - Ashdown Perfect Ten (30W, 1x10)
8183 - Ashdown TourBus 10 Union Jack
5224 - Ashdown Tourbus 10 (10W, 1x6.5)
5062 - Ashdown Tourbus 15 (15W, 1x8)
8988 - EA Euphonic Audio iAmp 350 Bass Head
8987 - Eden Nemesis RS410 Combo

Fender

4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
8284 - Fender Rumble 30 Bass Combo
4237 - Fender Rumble 350 (350W, 2x10)
5684 - Gallien Kruger 700RB 115 (320W, 1x15)
9008 - Hartke HMH112C Bass Combo

LINE 6

6019 - Line6 LowDown LD150 (150W, 1x12)
6018 - Line6 LowDown LD175 (175W, 1x15)
6017 - Line6 LowDown LD300 Pro (300W, 1x15)
5502 - Line6 LowDown LD400 Pro (400W, 2x10)
6020 - Line6 LowDown Studio 110 (75W, 1x10)
5382 - Line6 Lowdown LD15 (15W, 1x8)

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6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P (400W, 2x10)
6238 - Mark Bass CMD103H (600W, 3x10)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (400W, 1x12)
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (400W, 1x15)
5473 - Mark Bass Micromark (50W, 1x6)
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (400W, 1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (400W, 1x15W)
5471 - Mark Bass Minimark (250W, 2x6)

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5660 - Marshall MB15 (15W, 1x8)
6768 - Marshall MB150 (150W, 1x15)
5659 - Marshall MB30 (30w, 1x10)
5433 - Marshall MB4210 (450W, 2x10)
5658 - Marshall MB4410 (450W, 4x10)
6769 - Marshall MB60 (60W, 1x12)

ORANGE

5232 - Orange Crush PiX 100BXT (100W, 1x15)
5234 - Orange Crush PiX 25BX (25W, 1x8)
5233 - Orange Crush PiX 50BXT (50W, 1x12)
8061 - Peavey MAX126 10 Watt Bass Amp Combo
5965 - Peavey Max 112 (35W, 1x12)
5964 - Peavey Max 115 (50W, 1x15)

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6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w, 1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
8252 - SWR Black Beauty 350W Bass Amp Combo
5008 - Stagg 20 BA (20W, 1x8)
4738 - Stagg ADBA40 Upright (40W, 1x8)
4599 - TC Electronic BG500 115 500W, 1x15
4599 - TC Electronic BG500 115 (500W, 1x15)

Bass Heads

4387 - Ashdown 330, 330W
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4384 - Ashdown 550, 550W
8706 - Ashdown ABM1000 Lite Evo III
8752 - Ashdown ABM100h Bass Head
8704 - Ashdown ABM2000 Lite Evo III
6760 - Ashdown ABM500 EVO III 575W
6250 - Ashdown ABM500RC Evo III 575W
6761 - Ashdown ABM900 EVO 3, 575+575W
4399 - Ashdown JJ500 JJ Burnel Sig 575W
5338 - Ashdown BTA400 400W
8707 - Ashdown CTM300 Classic Tube Magnifier
4395 - Ashdown Drophead DP200H 200w Valve
5064 - Ashdown Little Bastard 30, 30W
4875 - Ashdown Little Bastard 30, 30W UK
8708 - Ashdown Little Bastard 550 Head
5671 - Ashdown Little Giant 350, 350W
6455 - Ashdown MAG300H Evo III 300W
9056 - Ashdown Mag300H Evo2 Bass Amp Head
8713 - Ashdown Mag600 Head Evo III Bass Head
5339 - Ashdown Mag600H Evo 2 575W
8710 - Asdown MiBass 220
7975 - Ashdown MiBass 550 Bass Amp Head
5687 - Gallien Kruger BL600 Backline 300W
9027 - Hartke Kilo 1000 Bass Head
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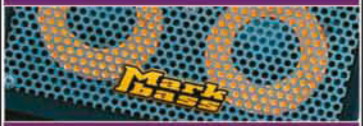
5500 - Line6 LowDown HD750, 750W
5675 - Mark Bass Little Mark 250 (250w)
5245 - Mark Bass Little Mark 800, 800W
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III (500w)
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
9035 - Markbass Little Mark Tube Bass Amp Head
5673 - Mark Bass R500 Classic (500W)
5243 - Mark Bass SD1200, 1200W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Bass Head
5434 - Marshall 1992LEM 100W
5652 - Marshall MB450H 450W
6618 - Marshall VBA400 Valve 400W
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
5242 - Orange TB1000 1000W Terror
5351 - Orange Terror Bass 500 TB500
5957 - Peavey Pro VB3 300W
5960 - Peavey Tour 450, 450W
5959 - Peavey Tour VB2 225W
5184 - TC Electronic RH450, 450W

Bass Cabinets



8733 - Ashdown 210T Deep Lite Bass Cab
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
6458 - Ashdown ABM210H Compact (2x10)
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
4376 - Ashdown ABM610 (6x10)
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
4394 - Ashdown CL115 Large (1x15)
4393 - Ashdown CL410H (4x10)
4392 - Ashdown CL414H Plus Horn (4x10)
4391 - Ashdown CL610 Tilt-Cab (6x10)
4390 - Ashdown CL810 (8x10)
8170 - Ashdown Klystron NEO410H 4 x10 Bass Cab
6452 - Ashdown MAG115 Deep (1x15)
6451 - Ashdown MAG210T Deep (2x10)
6450 - Ashdown MAG410T Deep (4x10)
4375 - Ashdown MAG414T Deep (4x10)
8754 - Ashdown MAG414T Deep Lite
8730 - Ashdown Mag 115 Deep Lite Bass Cab
8755 - Ashdown Mag410T Deep 4 x 10 Bass Cab
8756 - Ashdown Mag810T 8 x 10" Bass Cab
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8692 - Ashdown VS112 125 1 x 12 Bass Cab
4379 - Ashdown VS115 200 (1x15)
8691 - Ashdown VS212 200 2 x 12 Bass Cab
8711 - Ashdown VS412 600 Bass Extension Cab
9007 - Hartke HCH112 Bass Cab
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6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
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6767 - Marshall VBC412 (4x12)
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6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)
5240 - Orange SP210 Smart Power Isobaric (2x10)
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5238 - Orange SP410 Smart Power Isobaric (4x10)
6766 - Peavey 410TVX (4x10)
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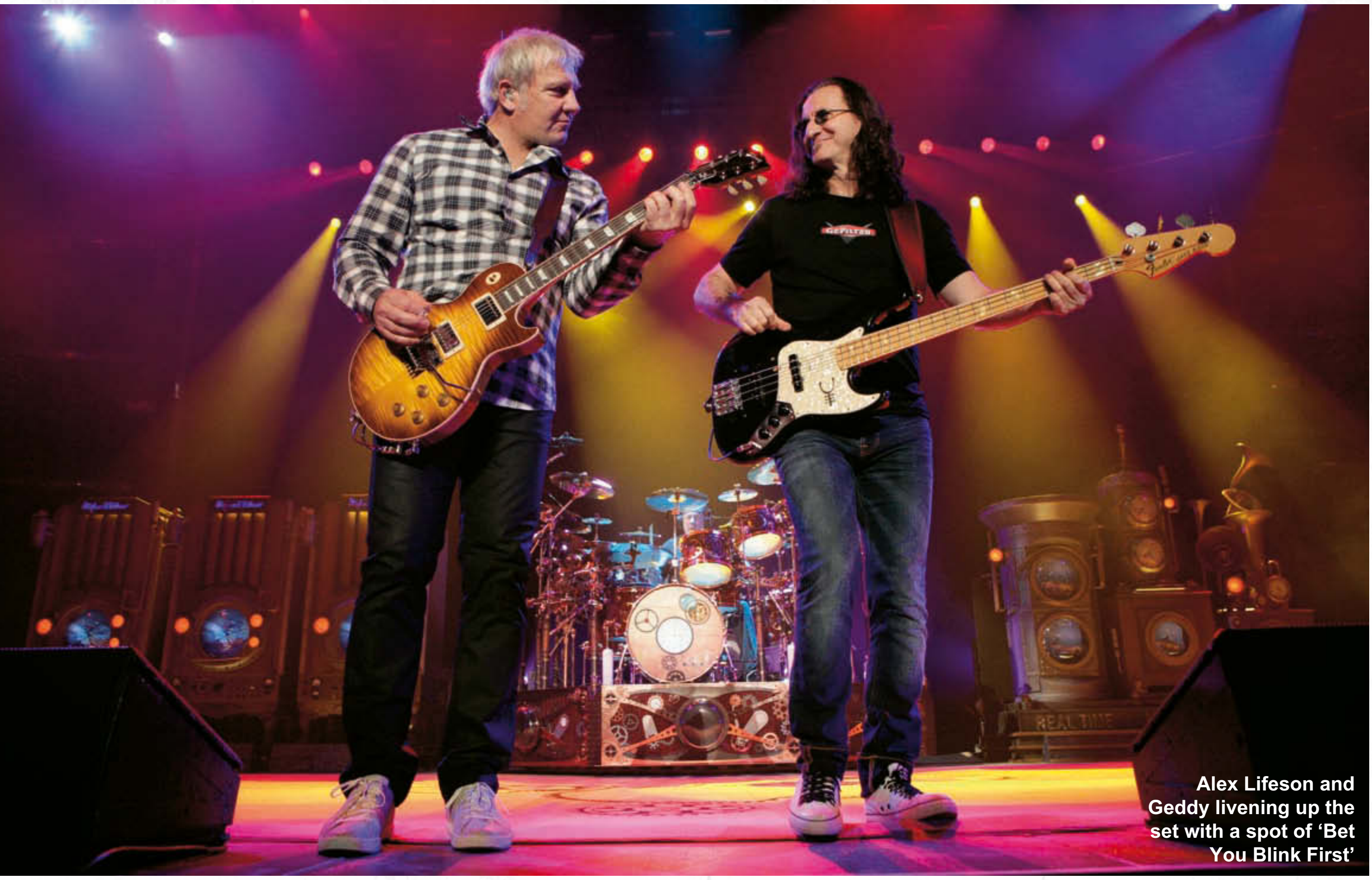

Alex Lifeson and Geddy livening up the set with a spot of 'Bet You Blink First'

gear-head," he tells us. "He's always on the look-out for the newest things. In the chorus of 'The Anarchist', there is some double-tracked bass in different octaves, so when we go out on the road, I'm going to need an octave-divider. He'll go out, and boom, there will be five octave-dividers for me to try out. If I want to put some phase on, he'll find the right phaser for me. John really understands all these devices, and he knows how to get the best for my sound. He's improved my sound so much with that attention to detail that he brings. I'm far more interested in getting a good solid basic bass sound, and then concentrating on the playing and the notes. I look for the sound I want, and I don't want to get distracted by all the gear that goes into making it. Besides, I work with a guitarist, and all guitarists are relentless gear-heads, and they're all about experimenting. It's where the old joke comes from – you tell a guitar player that the sound he has is great, and he'll say, 'Good, I'll change it!'"

Every bass player eventually finds one particular piece of equipment that lights up his or her life, the 'old faithful' that is an integral part of their individuality as a musician. You're probably keen to know what piece of kit occupies that space in Geddy Lee's rack? "I'd say the Parker Speaker Simulator is a quintessential part of my sound," he advises, with no pause for thought. "I discovered the Parker a few years ago when Alex [Lifeson, guitar] started using one with his guitars. I added one into my rack, and it's enabled me to move away from the big loudspeaker sound. It has a very interesting tone, and it's now an integral part of the sound I get with my Fender basses.

"I use a lot of interesting devices. I use a Sansamp for distortion and bottom end, and I use Orange amplifiers that I set really full on to give me the sound of speakers dying when I need it. But both of those are replaceable as pieces of equipment: there are other makes and models out there that would do the job well enough for me. The Parker has an indefinable aspect about it, though, and that is the one essential ingredient in the sound I create. Ultimately, your sound as a bass player comes from you; it comes from your bass and your strings and your fingers. You can put it through all kinds of different gadgets and sound enhancers and different effects, but at the end, it still sounds like you. Your sound goes where you go."

Any learning bassist, and even a fair few who have reached the status of professional player, would still love to catch a few words of advice from someone of Geddy's musical pedigree – so here they are.

"I think, aside from the standard, boring, but essential dictum of practise, practise, and then practise, my advice would be to keep an attitude of being open to other players. Listen to as many players as you can that you admire, and find out what it is they do that you like, and try to bring that into your own toolkit. I learned by ear; I didn't go to music school, so I learned by admiring other players. So when I listened to Jack Bruce, I became obsessed with the sound he got on [Cream's 1966 single] 'Spoonful', and the way he moved his hands up and down the fingerboard with such a fluid style.

Alex Lifeson, Neil Peart and our man Lee, the holy trinity of prog-rock, lay it down on last year's Time Machine Tour.

I was fascinated with Chris Squire, and the way he wrote those melodic bass parts for the Yes tracks, behind, alongside, or sometimes stepping out in front of Steve Howe's guitar work. I think it's important to have heroes, the guys that play how you would love to play, so pay attention to that individual ingredient that you like, and work on weaving it into your sound. It's not that you want to sound like those players, but you want to be able to do what they do, in your own way. I have always found that the more influences you have, the less easy it is for anyone to hear or work out what those influences are, because you work them into your own style of playing."

He continues, "The dangerous thing about getting to a good level as a bass player is that you might plateau, and become satisfied with the level you have reached, and stay there. I think you always need to have an approach of over-reaching in your playing, and always look to do something more complex and more dynamic, and always be looking to develop the way your bass sounds, and the technical aspects of getting that sound and making it your own. Take a step and risk failure, but take the step. It's OK to enjoy that step for a while, because that gives you confidence, and a confident player is a good player. So if, for example, you decide to bring a funky slap style to your playing, and you get it, it's fine to stay there for a while and enjoy it, and refine it. Once you've really mastered it and refined it away from the gimmick of the original sound you got, you don't have to go rushing on to the next thing. But just don't get too comfortable so that you stay there and never advance from that level."

At the time of our conversation, Geddy is about to start rehearsals for the band's world tour, which will be in progress by the time you read this. It's a complex business, given Rush's wilful enjoyment of complex arrangements and lengthy songs. He explains: "I rehearse the playing first. I try to play a song so many times that I can allow myself not to concentrate on it every second of the time, and then I can start to bring the vocal parts into play as well. There has to be a degree of auto-pilot to be a singing bassist, so you can play without thought and put your effort into the vocal projection. You need to concentrate on the vocal when you sing, but in between the lines, or the instrumental breaks, you can think about your bass playing, and bounce back and forth between the two. Getting to a comfortable level with a new song depends on how complex the song structure is, and I don't mean how complex the bass or the vocals are individually, it's about the line between the two."

He adds: "Some songs sound relatively simple from the vocal sound, but the bass part is so out of sync with the vocal structure that it becomes a nightmare to get the two running together, and that is hard to learn. To me, the playing and singing of a vocal and bass line that are utterly unsympathetic to each other is the hardest part of what I do. That can take weeks of intense work for some songs. The worst thing you can do is not serve the song properly on stage like you did in the studio. That applies especially with our audiences, because we know that a lot of them will know the songs note for note, and they'll know if I am not doing the proper lines, and they'll be silently accusing me with their eyes, saying 'Shame on you! You cheated us!' Ha ha! It's a good discipline for all of us… we know that they know."

Geddy concludes: "Every minute of the show needs total concentration throughout the time we are on stage. I have to say, it takes its toll: after 60 dates, we're ready to stop and rest. Going out night after night with the intention of getting it perfect every time can really start to fray your nerves, but that doesn't mean that we don't love doing it – the feeling after a great gig is one of the best things in the world. We never ever get tired of that, which is why we work so hard to make the next show the best ever." ■

Clockwork Angels is out now. Rush will be touring the world throughout 2012. Info: www.rush.com.

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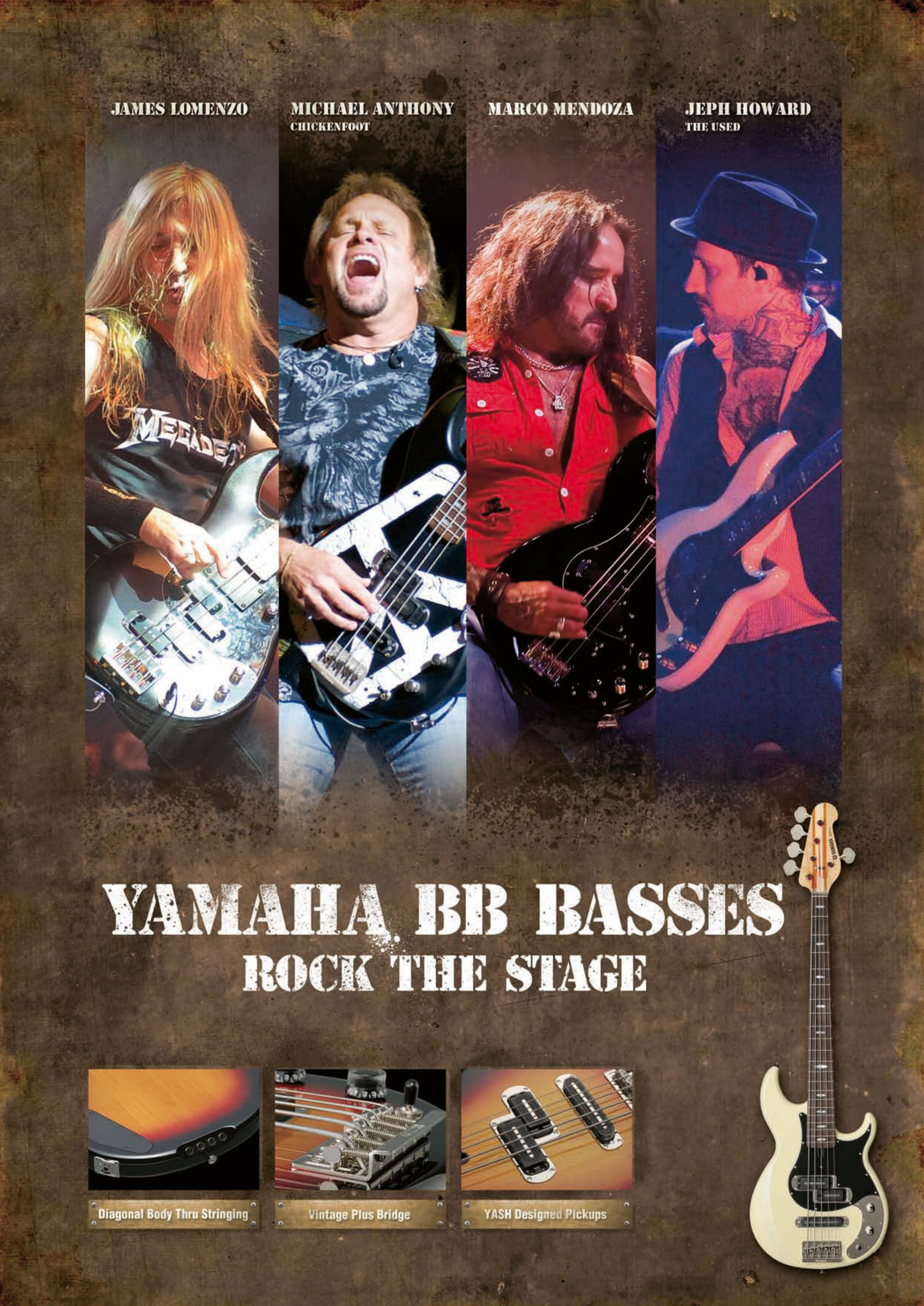
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Frequency Hacker

Jonathan Hischke discusses supplying the low end for Broken Bells, Dot Hacker and NorahJones and his passion for sound modulation. *Interview: Jon D'Auria*

"I've always had an addiction to buying new pedals and effects for bass, but now I think it's actually become a serious problem for me," muses Jonathan Hischke as he sips a glass of bourbon in the lobby of a Californian hotel. "Personally, I blame this guy, he's my main enabler." The man Hischke points to is Juan Alderete, his close friend and bassist in The Mars Volta. The two laugh and then fall into a deep discussion about the latest Dwarfcraft series of effects. Things seem to be business as usual.

Hischke may well have been serious about his obsessive habit when it comes to gear – toying with endless obscure pedals in a quest for extreme bass sounds. Nonetheless, the process seems to have been hugely rewarding. The Nebraska native has been busy in the past few years, landing some truly remarkable gigs. The diehard bass lover and moustache enthusiast has recently spent his time filling out the bottom end for Broken Bells, Norah Jones, Dot Hacker, Big Sir (Alderete's project), Le Butcherettes, EV Kain and Troy Van Leeuwen (guitarist with A Perfect Circle and Queens Of The Stone Age). While most session players would be taken aback by the calibre of artists who approach him, Hischke focusses on the reason he is being summoned: his creative songwriting on bass, and his impeccable tone.

Hischke was between rehearsals at his Los Angeles home when he got an unexpected call from his Broken Bells bandmate Brian 'Dangermouse' Burton. "I got a call one day from Brian – and he never calls, he always texts – so I knew it was important," says Hischke. "I picked up the phone and he told me to come down to his studio because he was working on stuff with Norah Jones and he needed to put down some bass. I cancelled

everything I was going to do that day and shot straight down to the studio."

No stranger to high-profile studio calls, Hischke grabbed a 60s Höfner Beatle bass and went into the session with Jones, where he ended up tracking the album's first single, 'Happy Pills'. "Norah is really just so free and laid back with music. She was very spontaneous, yet very on point, and she made a big impression on me," says Hischke. "She's a very down to earth person and really fun to hang out with, especially when we're making music together. I loved every minute of it, and it ended up being one of the easiest sessions that I've been a part of."

> "I remember going to my dad and telling him I wanted to play something exciting. He sat me down and told me to play bass"

The session included Burton on drums and guitarist Dan Elkan, both members of Broken Bells, the wildly popular indie collaboration between Burton and James Mercer of The Shins. Hischke was asked to join the band after they completed recording their self-titled debut album in 2010, and was immediately faced with the task of replicating the electric, synth and keyboard bass sounds which made the album so unique. This might induce many players to bring a surplus of basses and keyboards to the rehearsal sessions, but Hischke had other plans.

"We had a discussion about which keyboards and synths I'd have to use, but I made it my goal to use pedals to replicate and match all of the sounds that were on the record," he tells us. "In the end, I used octavers and synth pedals and I was able to play everything on a bass guitar. It was definitely a small victory for me. Brian was overseeing everything and he preferred the way that things felt when I was playing bass to when I was playing keyboard. I used an old 1965 short-scale Kay bass, which I love. It really gives me the hollow-body kind of tone."

Prior to his time with Broken Bells, Hischke's own penchant for moody compositions and effects-laden bass made him a highly sought-after player. After spending time as the bassist of the popular math/noise-rock band Hella, Hischke did some session work in northern California before getting a call from guitarist Josh Klinghoffer, now the newest member of Red Hot Chili Peppers. Klinghoffer urged Hischke to move out to LA to start a band with him, so the bassist instantly packed up his things and made the trip. The resulting sessions led to the formation of Dot Hacker, an experimental rock band featuring Klinghoffer, two members of Gnarls Barkley and Hischke, whose inspired bass playing takes centre stage.

"It's an interesting thing, because bass has ended up having a strong presence for sure, but it happened organically, so it wasn't fully my choice," says Hischke. "The songs started expanding and grew into orchestrations of a sort, and I felt like the bass had to be solid. I had to make it into a linear thing to ground the layers of texture. From there I could experiment a lot to make it stand up on its own. It was amazing to have that kind of freedom on bass, to be able to explore a lot of options and melodic ideas, without being trapped within a formula."

While you can hear hints of his favorite bassists in his playing – Tina Weymouth, Bernard Edwards, Rockette Morton, Jah Wobble and Rocco Prestia among them – Hischke's parents were his first musical influences, having introduced him to Jaco Pastorius and other bass greats at a young age. "My father was a saxophone player and he taught jazz history, so I was always around great music," says Hischke. "When I was growing up, both of my parents would listen to music around the house, like Weather Report and Stevie Wonder. I was in junior high when I decided that I wanted to play a 'cool' instrument, because I had played piano and been in choir for a long time. I remember going to my dad and telling him I wanted to play drums or guitar or something exciting, and he sat me down and told me that I needed to play bass. He had a whole ethos built about bass. He told me that bass players are laid back and they're always working, and he thought it would fit my personality. He was definitely right."

Luckily for Hischke, he not only possesses the cool of a seasoned veteran, but he always seems to be playing, whether in an LA studio or on a stage somewhere around the world. As we pay the tab and make our way out of the lobby, Hischke ruminates on what makes the bass such a particular instrument and why it takes a certain breed of person to embrace it. "By default, and in the tradition of the bass, you're always essentially a collaborator. I love being part of a bigger collective, and the bass plays an important role in all of that," says Hischke. "There are easy ways to impress people musically, but things like being flash don't constitute a good bass player. A drummer or a guitar player has a bar set as to what is considered impressive, and it's not always musical. It takes a little more intuition and subtlety to do it on bass. My approach to playing is very different from project to project. You do the preparations that you can. I research the music and players, and I try to bring the right equipment and attitude to it. But you can't burn yourself out on it, because it can turn into a mentality where it seems like a nine-to-five clock-punching job. I'll never let myself feel that way." ■

GEAR

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Effects Wren and Cuff Tall Font Russian, Tronographic Rusty Box, Tech21 VT Bass, Pigtronix EB2 Envelope Phaser, Digitech PDS 20/20, Aguilar Octamizer, DOD Meatbox.
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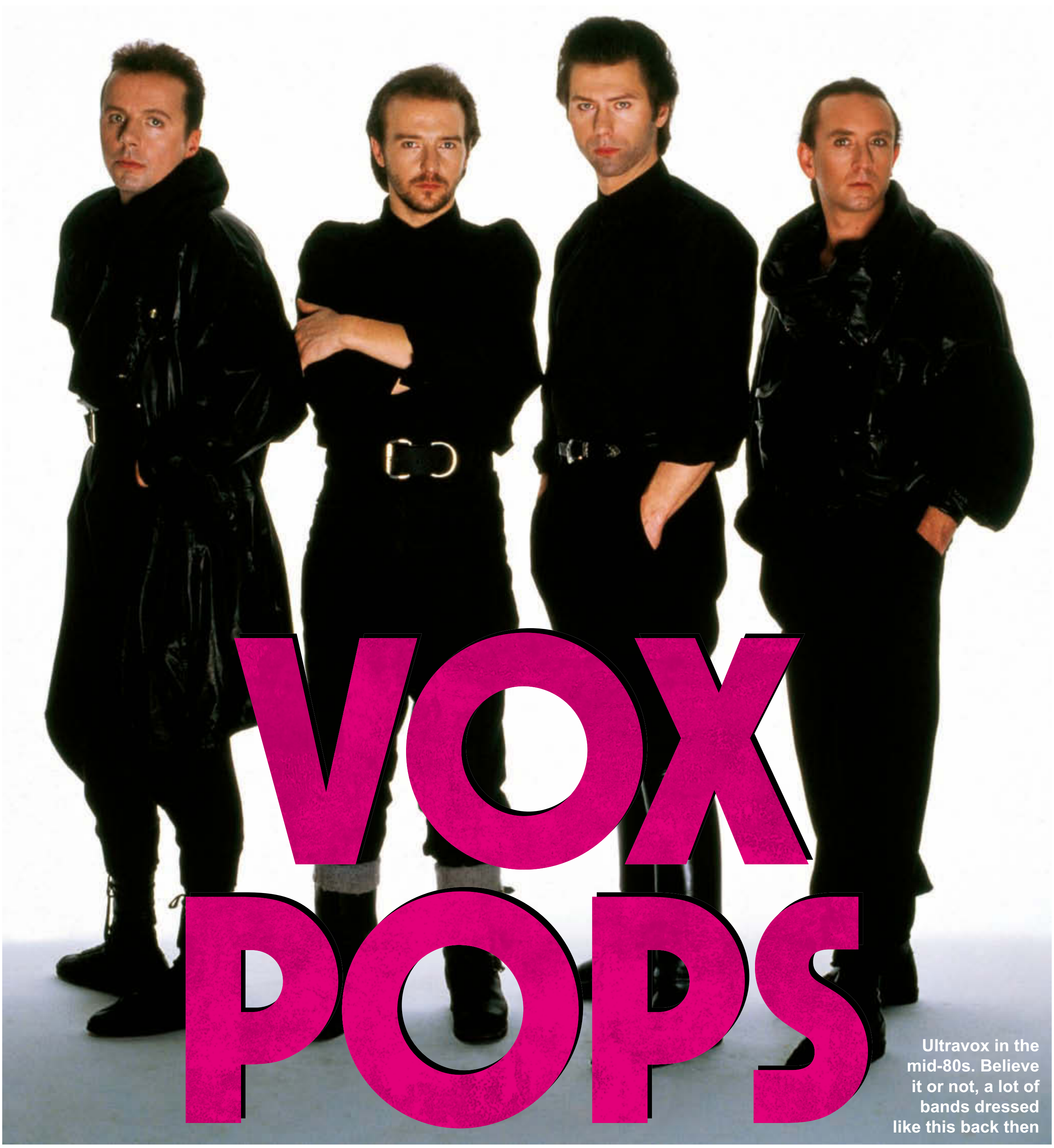


VOX POPS

Ultravox in the mid-80s. Believe it or not, a lot of bands dressed like this back then

Ultravox's Criss Cross reveals how he delivers the goods on the band's new album.

Interview: Joel McIver

"I normally find it almost impossible to play exactly the same thing twice," chuckles Ultravox bassist Chris Cross, which is curious, because – as anyone who followed his band at their peak in the early to mid-1980s will know – Ultravox's music is anchored by melodic, but generally solid bass-lines that don't vary enormously. But this statement ties in with Cross's character as a bassist on an eternal search for new approaches: "I really admire musicians that are joined by the hip to their instrument and are dedicated to their style of playing, but it's just not me. I always really envy people who have a hobby that they are 100 per cent into – as soon as I learn or discover something I just go on to something else!"

Ultravox's best-known line-up (Cross plus guitarist/vocalist Midge Ure, keyboard player Billy Currie and drummer Warren Cann) reformed recently to record a new album, *Brilliant*, laden with the synth-heavy sounds that made their fortunes three decades ago. "We've had an unbelievably good response to it so far, and are very pleased to be able to put it out with EMI. We're currently in pre-production work for a tour in September and October that will take in the UK and Europe – and it may develop from there," he enthuses.

Bass players would be wise to get to one of Ultravox's shows. Both the new and old material is bass-heavy in a way that pop music of the 80s so often was – think Duran Duran with fewer pretensions,

or U2 without the frowns – and in the live arena, Cross will be deploying an interesting arsenal of gear. “I play a Fender Precision fretless, a Fender Telecaster bass and a Rickenbacker 4003,” he explains, “and I also use an Ibanez and a Steinberger, which is good for the plane carry-on and overhead storage. Mostly I use whatever I feel like using, though – I’m not too precious about replicating or reproducing the exact sound on a recording.”

As for the signal chain, he adds: “For effects, live it’s mainly plug-ins. I like a lot of the Waves plug-ins for Logic. Amp-wise, when we rehearse we’re usually in a traditional four-piece setup, so it’s a Trace Elliot amp and a Trace 4x10” or SWR 2x10” cab – whatever I need to hear what I’m playing. When I work on stuff at home I sometimes use a Trace Elliot Brat.”

Cross doesn’t feel the need to trouble his roadie with an amplifier for live gigs. “Live, I usually use a Pod or Logic Mainstage,” he confirms. “There are no amps or cabinets onstage: I like to treat the bass live alongside a strong fundamental bottom end. I find in-ears and the rumble through the stage great to play to: it takes a bit of setting up, but it’s perfect for acoustically difficult gigs.”

“My favourite bass ever was a fretless Precision that I used when we recorded the first Ultravox! album”

Chris Cross today: older, wiser and with a more conventional wardrobe, but still a maestro

Talking of acoustic frequencies, you'll see and hear Cross playing a variety of extended-range basses, he says: "I have five- and six-string basses that I like playing. The six-string is a Wish Bass which I can't leave the house with, just in case Barney Rubble mugs me and takes it back to Fred… it has a unique design! But I love doodling around on it. It's fretless, of course. The main difficulty for a traditional four-string Fender Precision player is the string spacing and remembering that the thick string is not an E. I usually learn the song and forget that it's a five- or six-string, so I effectively transpose the bass physically rather than notationally. The five and sixes allow the depth you get from a synth bass, which I play 50 per cent of the time. For example, on the new album's title track, I play a Moog Pulse bass with a fretless Precision playing a loose reggae-ish line over the top."

Does our man slap? He would if it didn't cause actual pain, Cross tells us. "I mess around with it," he ponders, "but I'm quite a physical player so it hurts. I would love to have it up my sleeve, but for me it's a style that has to fit the music and be used well. Often it's there just because it can be. Sometimes it's annoying, like a drum solo or 10 minutes of twiddle on the guitar. Mark King is a very good example of using it very musically and judicially, and the old-school guys always put the fun in funk. Some [slap] players are extremely clever, but that's all."

Looking back at his long career as a bass player, Cross recalls his first instrument. "It was a Höfner, I think," he says. "It was painted red and I never really knew what it was. But the first bass I remember saving for ages for was a Gibson EB3, which I loved and still have. It needs complete restoration, sadly. I remember paying for it weekly from a pawn shop in West Green Road, Tottenham, which took ages, but I grinned all the way home walking back to Turnpike Lane!"

He continues: "My favourite bass ever was a fretless Precision that I used when we recorded the first Ultravox! album [1977; both band and album bore an exclamation mark at the time]. We were working with Brian Eno, and we went to his flat in Maida Vale, and he had an Ampeg fretless which I had never seen before, so I asked to borrow it and used that on the track 'My Sex'. I've loved using fretless ever since, but my gang are paranoid about tuning. My earliest influences were Jack Bruce and Andy Fraser, hence buying an EB3 – and then all the usual reprobates, but mainly I was influenced by the bass parts in different songs.

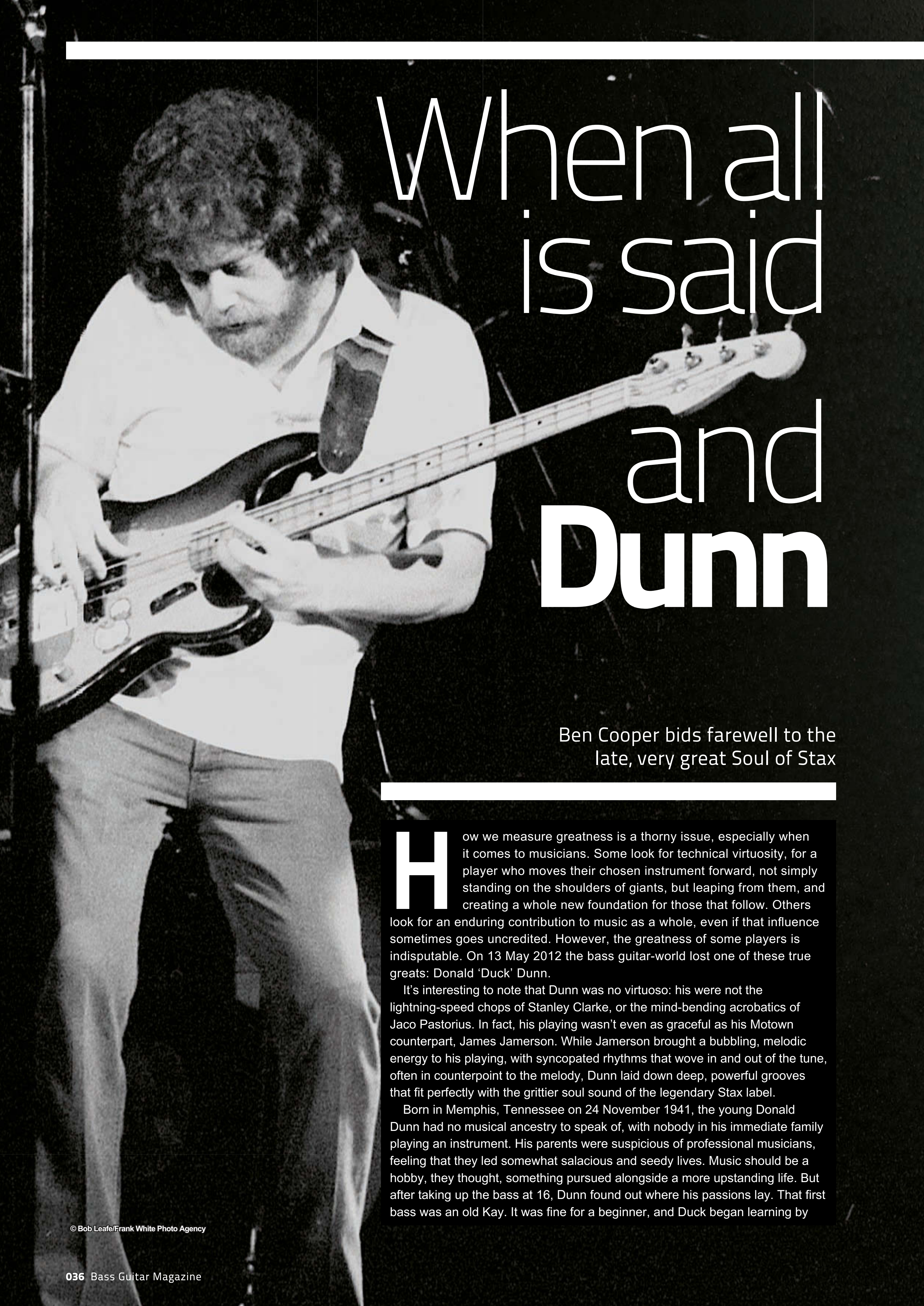
Apart from the usual Tamla and Atlantic solidness, I liked real Britpop in the form of the Small Faces, the Who and so on. I also find reggae and dub bass irresistible, plus a good splash of Beach Boys bass and the bottom string on a orchestral contrabass. I like anything that tickles your ribs – and genitals – in a nice way."

Steady on, matron! With all these sounds in his palette, how does Cross settle on a specific tone? He muses: "I could never settle for one tone, it would be like having only one colour. I like all the tones: some are just used in the right place at exactly the right time. We had a relevant experience recently when we were recording the new album. We were with producer Steve Lipson and I was going on and on about the fantastic guitar sound Jimmy Page had on 'Communication Breakdown', so he dialled it up on Youtube and played it really loud through the monitors – and it sounded really shit! The sound in my head was the sound I had heard when I saw them live when I was a teenager. In time it had been well and truly cemented away in the 'idealistic world' area of my memory, and had nothing to do with reality. If I ever thought I knew the 'ideal' bass sound, it would be time to check myself into a psychiatric ward and start taking the tablets…"

Any last words, Chris? "Eno once gave me a good tip when I was looking for a bass sound on his Moog," he remarks. "He said, 'Aim for a sound and you'll usually discover a much more interesting one on the search'. I totally agree with that. For me the bass is very philosophical, both as an instrument and as an area of the musical spectrum, but it's probably not best to think about it too much." We couldn't have said it better ourselves, frankly. ■

Info: www.ultravox.org.uk. Brilliant is out now on EMI.

When all is said and **Dunn**



Ben Cooper bids farewell to the late, very great Soul of Stax

How we measure greatness is a thorny issue, especially when it comes to musicians. Some look for technical virtuosity, for a player who moves their chosen instrument forward, not simply standing on the shoulders of giants, but leaping from them, and creating a whole new foundation for those that follow. Others look for an enduring contribution to music as a whole, even if that influence sometimes goes uncredited. However, the greatness of some players is indisputable. On 13 May 2012 the bass guitar-world lost one of these true greats: Donald ‘Duck’ Dunn.

It’s interesting to note that Dunn was no virtuoso: his were not the lightning-speed chops of Stanley Clarke, or the mind-bending acrobatics of Jaco Pastorius. In fact, his playing wasn’t even as graceful as his Motown counterpart, James Jamerson. While Jamerson brought a bubbling, melodic energy to his playing, with syncopated rhythms that wove in and out of the tune, often in counterpoint to the melody, Dunn laid down deep, powerful grooves that fit perfectly with the grittier soul sound of the legendary Stax label.

Born in Memphis, Tennessee on 24 November 1941, the young Donald Dunn had no musical ancestry to speak of, with nobody in his immediate family playing an instrument. His parents were suspicious of professional musicians, feeling that they led somewhat salacious and seedy lives. Music should be a hobby, they thought, something pursued alongside a more upstanding life. But after taking up the bass at 16, Dunn found out where his passions lay. That first bass was an old Kay. It was fine for a beginner, and Duck began learning by

© Bob Leafe/Frank White Photo Agency

playing along to old records, learning the basslines and gradually embellishing them with his own grooves.

In high school Dunn became close friends with a certain Steve Cropper, who later developed into one of the tastiest guitar players ever to grace the planet. The duo put together a band called The Royal Spades, and even scored a minor hit shortly after they graduated. Cropper quit the band and headed off to work as a house guitarist for Stax, but Dunn tried to please his parents by following his father into the candy business. He worked several jobs before being lured away by Cropper to become the bassist for Booker T & The MGs, where he replaced Lewie Steinberg.

By the time Dunn joined the band, they had already scored their biggest hit, the instrumental 'Green Onions'. However, more enduring fame came in later years after they became the house band for Stax Records. In this capacity Booker T & The MGs backed some of the biggest stars of popular music: Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Bill Withers and Sam & Dave are just some of the legendary acts whose low-end duties were held down by Dunn during this time. Listen out for that grooving, plummy bass on Redding's '(Sittin On) The Dock Of The Bay', a classic Duck Dunn line.

It wasn't just the playing that made the band stand out, though. At a time when soul music, and particularly the Memphis soul scene – always deemed more authentic than the poppier sound of Detroit's Motown – was a black preserve, the racially integrated make-up of Booker T's band made them unique. Indeed, Dunn himself later commented that, when he toured in England with Otis Redding, he felt that audiences were surprised to see a white man playing such soulful, grooving basslines.

By the time Dunn joined Booker T he had made the switch from his Kay to a Fender Precision. The iconic P-Bass was the holy grail for bass guitarists back then, as indeed it is for many players today, and in 1958 Dunn managed to scrimp together enough money to buy his first – which he kept in his possession until his death. The fat, growling tone of the Precision, which he wound with flatwound strings like Jamerson, was perfect for the sound of the multitude of hit singles on which Dunn played. His association with the P-Bass was so strong that when he had a signature bass made for him by Fender *(see below)* it was essentially a reissue of his original 1958 model. Even his later Lakland Signature model was a new spin on the Precision.

When Booker left the MGs in 1971 the group disbanded, with each of the musicians going their separate ways. Like most musicians of the time, Dunn was poorly paid for his work at Stax, something he tried to keep in perspective in later years. Despite this, he found no shortage of work, becoming a first-call bassist for artists as diverse as Tom Petty, Joan Baez, Albert King, Leo Sayer, Rod Stewart, Eric Clapton and Neil Young.

However, one of Dunn's most famous gigs was surely as part of the Blues Brothers. Starting out as a comedy sketch by Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi on Saturday Night Live, the Blues Brothers quickly took on a life of its own, recording an album and featuring in the eponymous Hollywood film, now cult viewing around the world. The success of the musical side came from the hand-picked line-up of backing musicians, two of whom were Dunn and his old partner Steve Cropper. Although he was initially reluctant to become involved, Dunn was persuaded into it by his wife and later looked back on the project as the most fun band to which he had ever contributed – aside from his beloved MGs.

> "Dunn laid down deep, powerful grooves that were the perfect fit to the gritty soul sound of the legendary Stax label"

By the millennium Dunn had begun to slow things down, but was still playing gigs with the reformed MGs and doing some studio work, as well as guesting at special live events. Sadly his musical odyssey came to an end this year. He had been performing in Japan, at the famous Blue Note jazz club in Tokyo, with lifelong friend Steve Cropper, and after five double shows he returned to his hotel room, where he passed away in his sleep. With his death the bass world has lost one of its true greats, but thanks to his enormous musical legacy we'll never truly be without him. ■

Stax Sounds

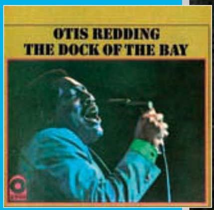
Duck Dunn was honoured with a very limited edition signature Precision bass in 1998. Made by Fender Japan, the bass was available only in Candy Apple Red and was essentially a reissue of his beloved 1958 P-Bass. It had a one-piece maple neck with maple fingerboard, a gold anodised pick guard, chrome hardware and an authentic finger rest on the treble side of the upper bout. These are pretty rare nowadays and something for fans of Dunn to hunt out.

Lakland also released a Duck Dunn signature bass. Although highly influenced by the Precision, it featured a slimmer neck at Duck's request. Due to the rigours of thousands of hours of playing and touring, Dunn wanted something a little easier to play, and having tried a bass bought for his son, which married a Precision body to a Jazz neck, he opted for the slimmer neck profile.

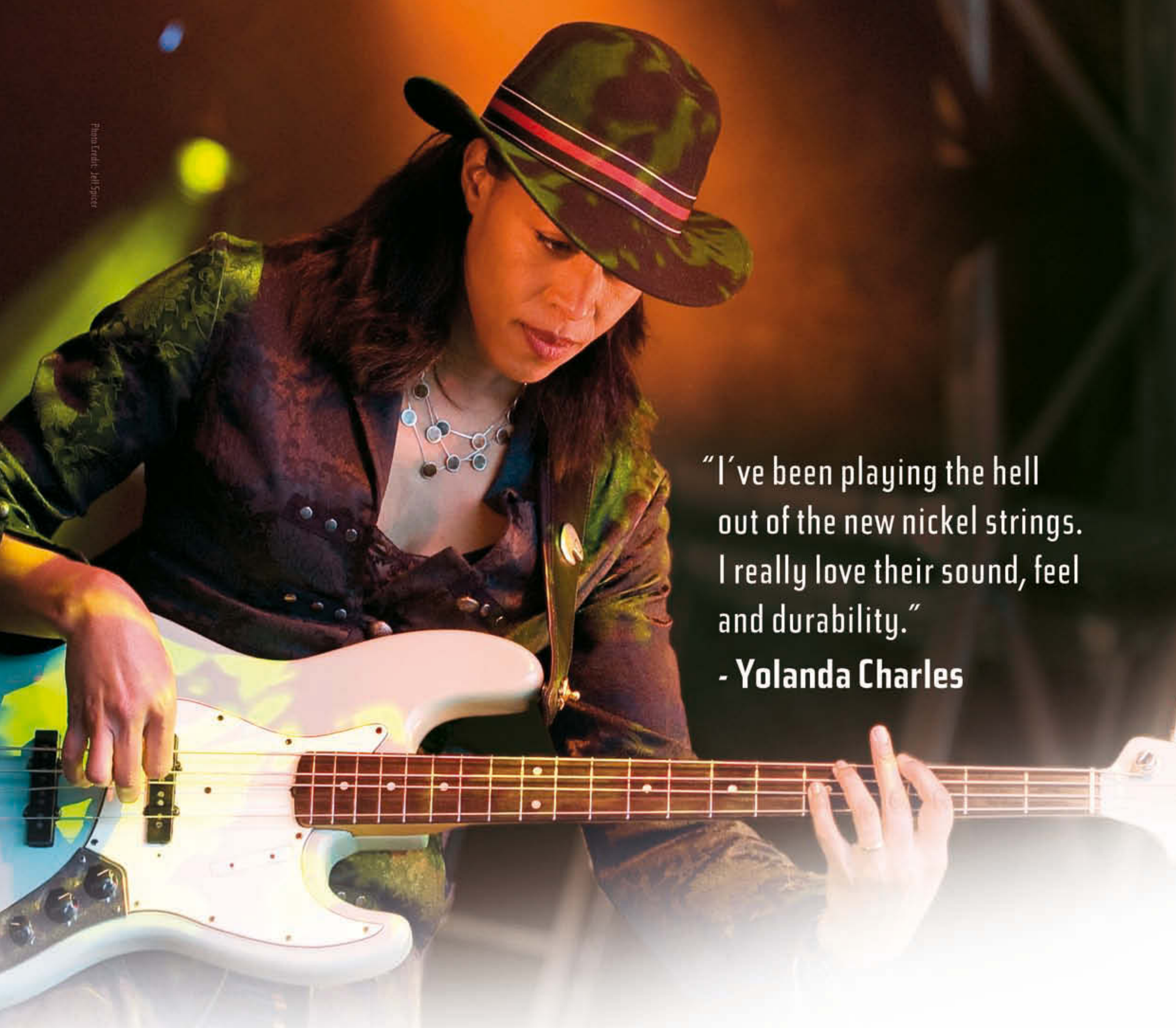
In terms of amplification, Duck used Ampeg throughout most of his career. In the early days he ran through an Ampeg B15 in the studio, and in later years turned to that powerhouse of the bass amp world, the SVT-4 Pro, usually hooked up to an SVT 810E cab.

Duck Discography

A full list of Duck Dunn's playing credits would take up a page all by itself, but here's a choice sample to give you an idea of his wide-ranging influence.



Wilson Pickett *In The Midnight Hour*
Albert King *Born Under A Bad Sign*
Booker T & The Mgs *Hip Hug-Her*
Otis Redding *The Dock Of The Bay*
Isaac Hayes *Presenting Isaac Hayes*
Muddy Waters *Fathers And Sons*
Bill Withers *Just As I Am*
Elvis Presley *Raised On Rock/For Ol' Times Sake*
Rod Stewart *Atlantic Crossing*
Joan Baez *Gulf Winds*
Sam & Dave *Back At 'Cha!*
Diana Ross *Baby It's Me*
Peter Frampton *Where I Should Be*
Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers *Damn The Torpedoes*
Leo Sayer *Here*
Blues Brothers *Made In America*
Bob Dylan *Shot Of Love*
Stevie Nicks *Bella Donna*
Eric Clapton *Money And Cigarettes*
Neil Young *Are You Passionate?*



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Downloaded

The country's biggest rock festival came and went with a bang, bringing some of the best bassists on the planet along for the ride. Joel McIver tells the tale. *Photos: Tina Korhonen*

Metallica's Robert Trujillo, laying down the law with one of several tasty basses, the lucky so-and-so

And so it came to pass that the heavens opened upon the gathered masses, and lo! A sea of mud did fall upon the populace.

Yes, filthy weather was the general impression which most of us took home from this year's instalment of the Download Festival, its tenth appearance since it rebranded itself from the old Monsters Of Rock event. We bass players are indomitable, fortunately, and not even the gigantic levels of rain, wind, cold and swearing from the campsite deterred us from homing in on the best rock bassists of our time.

We'll skip lightly over Friday 8 June, which was the worst day weather-wise and also rather low on bass action given that the Prodigy were headlining and DJs Chase & Status were the main support. However, we'll always doff the hat to the great Adam Duce of Machine Head, whose band were on blistering form despite the on-stage tornado, and who always astounds us with his speed-picking precision and accuracy. You may recall that we stuck him on the cover of the mag a couple of issues ago, and with good reason.

Saturday 9 June was better in so many ways. For starters, the day belonged to the mighty Metallica, whose bass monster Robert Trujillo always makes us cheer with his crazy sideways 'crab walk' (his description, not ours), scintillating fingerstyle and penchant for switching basses every couple of songs. In the nine years or so since he's been a member of the biggest heavy metal band there has ever been or ever will be, we've seen Trujillo play a series of Precisions and Rickenbackers, as well as his spanking new chrome signature model from Warwick, and without fail he plays them all like a demon. Before Metallica we watched a series of lesser but equally gripping bands hit the (thankfully drier) stage, including those innuendo-deploying chaps Steel Panther, whose bassist Lexxi Foxxx comes armed with a Kramer that we rather liked in a review a while back. *BGM* columnist Paolo Gregoletto was on top form with Trivium, pounding out fingerstyle lines on his signature BC Rich Warlock – it was a great day for pointy basses…

Sunday was glorious, both in terms of precipitation (or lack of) and the array of bass-spanking talent on offer. Obviously David Ellefson of Megadeth, John Campbell of Lamb Of God and JD DiServio of Black Label Society can be relied upon every single time to deliver the goods at the low end like few others, but that doesn't mean that it ever gets predictable watching them play. The day belonged to Black Sabbath, of course, or at least the three-quarters of them who agreed to come along (drummer Bill Ward backed out, citing an 'unsignable' contract). Geezer Butler is the man. Smacking his bass and banging his head like a man literally a third his age, Geezer proved yet again that age is no barrier to talent and commitment. If any of us play half as well at half his vintage, we'll be mighty bassists indeed… ■

Ben Shepherd of Soundgarden, bringing the post-grunge epicness

Biffy Clyro's James Johnston: investing some of those Matt Cardle-derived royalties in new gear, no doubt

Marco Hietala of Nightwish, rocking a gorgeous John Entwistle Buzzard bass in fetching rust-coloured camo

The great Adam Duce of Machine Head, levelling the crowds with Yamaha in hand

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Modulus Funk Unlimited FU4 and Quantum 5 Basses

Basses from space? Sam Wise prepares for blast-off

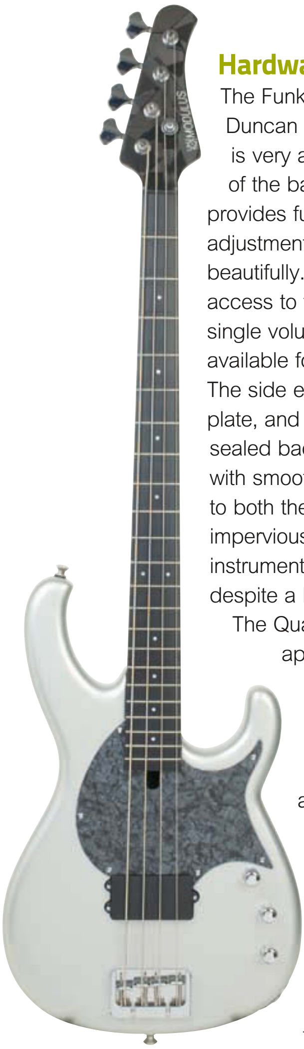
1977 was a big year for the bass guitar. Aerospace engineer Geoff Gould, in partnership with Alembic's Rick Turner, debuted the world's first carbon fibre bass neck, and Modulus was born, named for the high 'modulus of elasticity' (basically, the stiffness) of the composite material. Thirty-five years later, Modulus are beloved of uncompromising bass players from Weather Report to Pearl Jam, and a further step forward has seen them add the Genesis hybrid neck, where the stiffness is provided by a carbon fibre skeleton and tonewoods add to the harmonic complexity of the tone. The basses we have here (should they be Modulii when there's more than one?) are members of the all carbon fibre neck range – the classic Quantum and the optimistically named Funk Unlimited. The latter was known as the Flea Bass, until the world's most famous punk-funk arthropod took his endorsement elsewhere.

Body And Neck

While we hesitate to describe any bass finished in silver sparkle as conventional-looking, the Funk Unlimited owes a debt to Leo Fender, particularly in his Music Man days. It's a classic look, rather at odds with the super-futuristic basses which Modulus produced in the early 80s. The body, under all that metalflake, is alder, and whilst there's a nod there, it's far from a Stingray clone. The four-string neck is where the space age really begins, with layer upon layer of hand-applied pre-impregnated carbon with a 'spacey' top layer that Modulus call KLD, or 'Thousand (K) Ladies Dancing'. The composite fingerboard carries 22 perfectly dressed frets and simple pearl dot position markers, and while the neck itself has an unusual feel, it's not obstructive. You'd be hard pressed to tell the fingerboard from rosewood, playing with your eyes shut.

The Quantum is much more in the mould of a Warwick or Status: the alder body has that extended top horn which characterised the vanguard of the active bass wave, and is capped with attractive but understated Chechen wood. Here Modulus have fitted a five-string neck, though there are options for four-string, five-string in three different widths, and six-string. This version is the same width as the six-string neck, a hand-stretching 2" at the nut, giving it the broadest string spacing in the range.

Neck construction is identical to the Funk Unlimited, but here we have 24 frets, with easy access all the way to the top, in case you've forgotten what the 'bass' part of bass guitar means. Overall, the Quantum screams its adherence to the modernist bass school, and handsome though it is, it doesn't have quite the visual distinction that sets the Funk Unlimited apart.



Hardware

The Funk Unlimited is fitted with a Seymour Duncan Basslines MM humbucker, which is very appropriate for the Stingray style of the bass. The chrome Hipshot B-Bridge provides full, if precarious-looking intonation adjustment, and offsets the metalflake paint beautifully. Three knurled chrome controls give access to the Bartolini NTBT pre-amp, with a single volume control, plus bass and treble available for recreating your funkiest tones. The side entry jack is reinforced with an oval plate, and at the north end, we have a set of sealed back Gotoh tuners which do their job with smoothness and stability. A testament to both the quality of the tuners and the imperviousness of the neck was that our test instrument came out of the box bang in tune, despite a long trip with Fed-Ex.

The Quantum takes a rather more complex approach in electronic terms than the Funk Unlimited's single pickup, with a pair of Bartolini pickups and an Aguilar OPB3 pre-amp. This is connected to a rather opaque array of knurled black knobs: there's a master volume, pickup mix control and treble all on individual controls, while the bass and mid are (inexplicably) on a stacked knob. Once again, there's a Hipshot bridge, this time a more robust looking A-Bridge unit, and the same Gotoh tuners as on the Funk Unlimited. Overall, both instruments absolutely reek of quality, with fantastic materials, outstanding attention to detail and excellent finishing, just as they should be at this price.

Technical Specification

Modulus Funk Unlimited FU4
Price £2095
Made In USA
Scale Length 34"
Frets 22
Nut Composite
Neck Carbon fibre composite
Fingerboard Phenolic composite
Body Alder
Pickup 1 Seymour Duncan Basslines MM humbucker, Bartolini NTBT preamp
Tuners Gotoh closed back
Controls Volume, active treble, active bass
Bridge Hipshot B-Bridge
Colours Silver metalflake (12 other gloss, flake or metallic finishes available)
Weight: 3.5 kilos

What We Think

Plus Craftsmanlike and glittery!
Minus Just a little more punch would be welcome
Overall A good straightforward bass which ticks a lot of boxes

BGM Rating — Out Of Five

Build Quality	★★★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★☆
Value For Money	★★★★☆

Sounds

You feel you know what to expect from the Funk Unlimited, both from the Stingray looks and the Flea connection, but it doesn't totally fit the presumptions. Certainly this is a fat-sounding bass, and with the simple controls, it's easy to dial in the tones you want. Winding the bass up results in a big, chewy tone with tooth-rattling lows, and thunder as you climb the neck. Dialling in a bit more treble absolutely ups the punch, and it's easy to get a signature Flea tone for those Chili Peppers moments, but if you're expecting a full-blooded P-Funk tone, it's not really here. It's a great-sounding bass, and lends itself to quite a range of styles, but it's slightly more sensible than you might expect. It'll take care of your indie rock and punk

work, and lends itself nicely to slap, but rightly or wrongly, we were expecting a little more edge here.

The Q5, by comparison, is a bass with a huge range of tone. The underlying sound is a little more woody than the percussive Funk Unlimited, and of course, the low B-string gives you that bit more opportunity to shake the foundations. The slightly less serrated tone encourages complex noodling: if you dig in and groove, it can of course accommodate that style, although it also calls to the player from the jazz arena. As you might expect, it doesn't quite punch with the Funk Unlimited even when wide open: the Bartolinis just aren't intended for that – but the range of booming low end and cello-like sustain further up the neck makes the Q5 a real joy to play. The neck width becomes a little unwieldy once you get up where the air is thin, but the string spacing means that tapping is a joy, and for all that it isn't as punchy as the FU, slapping the low B is a trouser-flapping joy.

Conclusion

If you're prepared to spring for these basses, you're playing with the big boys. It's not quite Alembic money, but at this price point there is a great range of luxury basses available to you, so they really need to be good. Thankfully, they're just that: the excellent materials and fabulous build quality are hallmarks, and while the Quantum's styling is a bit me-too, the standout carbon fibre neck makes it jump off the rack at you. The truth is, while these are great-sounding instruments, they don't sound that different from wooden-necked basses – and maybe we wouldn't want them to. They're stable, they eliminate dead spots, and they're likely to last more or less forever, which is something you want from a bass you love. The deeper truth is that Modulus make great basses, and you should try one – regardless of what you think about carbon fibre. ■

Technical Specification

Modulus Quantum 5
Price £2645
Made In USA
Scale Length 34"
Frets 24
Nut Composite
Neck Carbon fibre composite
Fingerboard Phenolic composite
Body Alder with Chechen cap
Pickup 2 x Bartolini pickups, Aguilar OBP-3 preamp
Tuners Gotoh closed back
Controls Volume, pickup blend, active treble, mid and bass
Bridge Hipshot A-Bridge
Colours Numerous capwoods and 32 finishes available
Weight 4.3 kilos

What We Think

Plus Massive low end, beautifully made
Minus Confusing control layout
Overall A bass that does almost everything, and does it well

BGM Rating

BGM Rating	Out Of Five
Build Quality	★★★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★★
Value For Money	★★★★½

EMG
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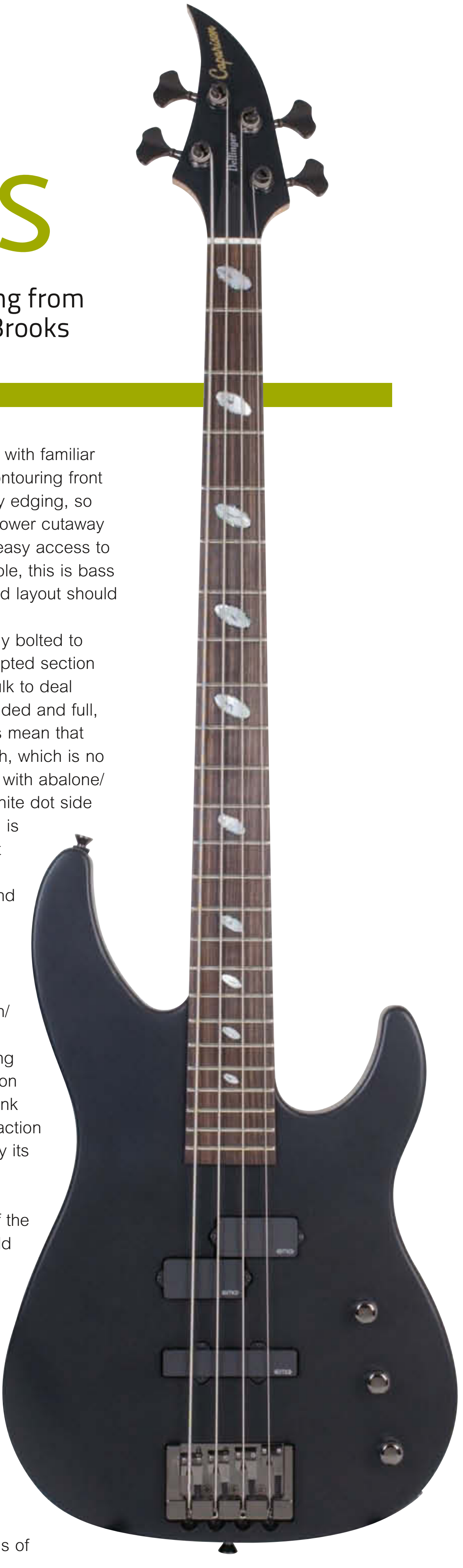
Caparison Dellinger Bass

For those about to rock, we salute you – and this offering from Caparison looks like it has one thing on its mind. Mike Brooks gets down and dirty with this Japanese upstart



Many of you may be unfamiliar with the Caparison name, but they have been producing fine Japanese instruments since 1995. Looking at the styling and overall design of this bass, it comes as no surprise to learn that the company developed out of Jackson/Charvel's Japanese design division. This is the only bass currently on offer from the company, but a quick scan of the instrument portfolio indicates that the company has firmly placed itself in the rock arena, so the pointed headstock and dark demeanour come as no surprise.

Before even getting to grips with this bass, the hefty £2299 price-tag means this bass has to seriously deliver the goods to justify its price… so no pressure, then. With no obvious visual indication of where the money is being spent, is this bass hiding a secret weapon in its armoury?

Build Quality

Straight from the hard case, this bass doesn't feel overly heavy, despite having an ash body. The satin neck is smooth and well-finished, and the black finish is surprisingly 'matt' to the touch, rough but not in an adverse way. The lack of any protective coating means that extensive fingernail or pick contact may tarnish the effect, particularly in front of the neck pickup if slapping.

The body shape is nothing new, with the Dellinger's designers safely opting for a Fender P-style shape with familiar rounded curves and top and bottom horns. The contouring front and back is as expected, along with rounded body edging, so the bass feels very familiar to wear and play. The lower cutaway is perhaps a little shallow, not allowing the player easy access to the upper frets of the 24-fret neck – but on the whole, this is bass design by numbers. Opting for a familiar shape and layout should broaden the appeal of the instrument.

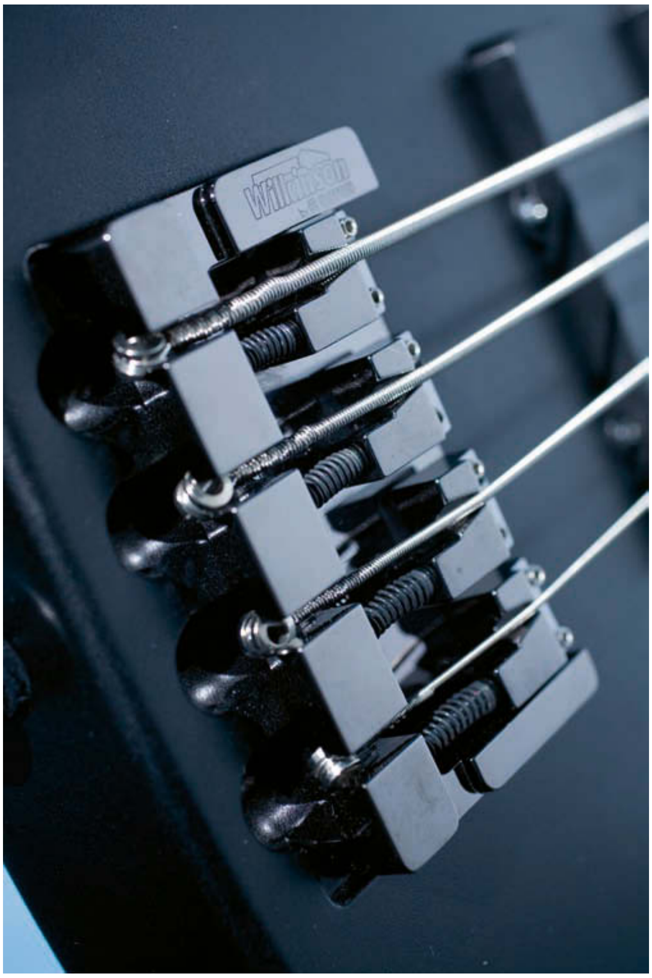
The five-piece maple and walnut neck is securely bolted to the body with no gaps around the joint, and a sculpted section on the rear of the body means that there is less bulk to deal with around the neck heel. The neck profile is rounded and full, and doesn't taper as it reaches the nut, but it does mean that the profile remains consistent along its entire length, which is no bad thing. The rosewood fingerboard comes fitted with abalone/mother of pearl clock face position markers and white dot side position markers, and the standard of fret dressing is excellent across the whole neck, with no sharp fret ends anywhere.

The angled headstock with its matching finish and distinct shape (which for many will determine its appeal) sports a 'two over two' tuner arrangement and comes fitted with Gotoh machine heads finished in Gotoh Cosmo Black, which looks like black nickel. The controls, strap buttons and Gotoh/Wilkinson bridge have the same colouring: the last of these looks like a fairly substantial unit, with string spacing set at 19mm. Although intonation and action adjustments can be made, the bridge is countersunk into the body, which should permit an even lower action than usual. The truss rod cover is almost hidden by its colouring, and a bone nut has been used.

The simple control layout of volume/volume/tone means that delicate tone-shaping is not the order of the day. The active EMG P/J pickup configuration should provide a strong, robust signal, and as it's almost an industry standard these days, their performance isn't in any doubt. A quick peek inside the control cavity showed plenty of shielding and a simple layout, although the wiring was a little messy as it hadn't been tied back.

Playability And Sounds

The Dellinger's natural unplugged tone is vibrant, resonant and very clear. The fresh strings obviously have an effect on this, but the clear tone and strong sustain are definitely beneficial to the character of the bass before it is amplified. In terms of



Technical Specification

Caparison Dellinger Four-String Bass
Price £2299
Made in Japan
Colour Pro black: matt finish
Body Ash
Neck Five-piece maple and walnut bolt-on, four screw attachment
Fingerboard Rosewood
Pickups EMG P &J, active
Electronics Active pickups, passive circuit
Controls Volume, volume, master tone
Tuners Gotoh GB707
Bridge Gotoh/Wilkinson WBBO 4
Nut width 38mm
Scale length 34" (864mm)
Frets 24
Weight 3.9kgs (8lbs 7oz)
Case included Yes, hardcase
Left-hand model available No

What We Think

Plus Solidly constructed with plenty going for it. Strong tone and punch that give it a vibrant character. Hardcase included
Minus Available in any colour as long as it's black. The price-tag will put many people off as there's no clear evidence of where your money is going
Overall A surprisingly good performer that may face an uphill struggle to stand its ground

Contact Details

Email enquiries@cranes.co.uk
Web www.caparisonguitarcompany.com

BGM Rating — Out Of Five

Build Quality	★★★★☆
Sound Quality	★★★★☆
Value For Money	★★★☆☆

balance and weight, the bass sits well on the player's leg without a strap and although there is a degree of headstock bias, this is non-existent once the bass is placed on a strap..

Plugging the beast in and running each pickup individually, that strong acoustic tone is readily conveyed, with all the thump and rounded tone you would expect of an EMG P pickup. The inverted position of the split coil helps to take some of the boominess out of the E string, and accentuates the lower mids while giving the G string more character and some extra definition. Moving over to the J pickup, the nasal honk you would expect is there in all its glory, but the mids sound tight and defined. Rolling off the tone control takes away some of the high end sharpness, leaving a punchy midrange tone that really works on its own merits.

Mixing the two together opens up a range of sounds that will work for fingerstyle players, pick players, slappers and tappers alike, yet with the plethora of EQ systems fitted to many basses these days, the simplicity of this system is surprisingly effective and workable. With both pickups on full and the tone control wide open, the Dellinger has so much bark and snarl that you may find you have to adapt your playing style so that the signal doesn't convey too much string noise and fret rattle, unless of course you like to have plenty of both in your sound.

The combination of the active pickups, timbers and overall construction make for a tonally solid instrument, yet the bass signal remains tight and powerful throughout. Used in a band setting, the bass really delivered a strong, punchy performance that bubbled nicely in the overall mix, and there's no doubt that this is very much a 'plug and play' bass.

Conclusions

As it's the only bass on offer in their range at present, Caparison are pinning all their bass hopes on this instrument – and with no colour choices available other than black and with no left-hand models, this really is a 'love it or hate it' kind of instrument. The styling is clearly aimed at the rock and metal fraternities, and the headstock design may be a severely limiting factor in its appeal.

That said, the bass performs admirably. It plays very well, it's comfortable and well-balanced, the setup is fantastic and the sonic performance borders on the surprisingly good. Yet you have to question the pricing strategy. At a snip under £2300, you can easily acquire the bass of your dreams, custom built, with a variety of options in every category open to you. Unless the Dellinger is your idea of bass nirvana, why would you opt to fork out this sort of money when other companies in this market offer similarly-styled basses at a much lower price?

It's a tough one: it's hard to see this bass taking off over here, particularly in such financially challenging times. Were it priced in the £1000 to £1300 bracket, it might be in with more of a chance. As it is, by all means check the Dellinger out and see if it ticks all of your bass requirement boxes, but make sure you check out the competition as you may find what you're looking for elsewhere. ■

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Ernie Ball Music Man

H/H Reflex Game Changer Bass

Is it a bass? Is it a web app? No, it's both. Kevin Sanders road-tests a bass from the future

For over 30 years, Music Man has been producing some of the most innovative instruments available. The original Stingray designed by Leo Fender was groundbreaking, offering for the first time active electronics on a bass that took the best design features of the Jazz and Precision – and, dare I say, improved upon both. Under the stewardship of Ernie Ball, the Music Man company has grown and prospered, continuing to produce Fender's brilliant Stingray design, but also using it as a development platform. The company have introduced new features and made improvements and adjustments as manufacturing and material technologies have allowed.

Build Quality

Several things make this bass a radical departure from previous Music Man designs: the use of a mahogany 'sound block' within the ash body; the solid top bout, which gives an almost Telecaster-esque look; and the comprehensive, complex EQ and interface, which allows countless pickup configurations. More about that later, but first a preliminary glance over the bass – which reveals, as we expected, top-quality tone woods and excellent finishing.

The mahogany sound block adds little to the weight, and it will be interesting to see what (if any) effect it has on the natural tone of the instrument, compared to the solid ash body of our 'control' Stingray. The finish is absolutely flawless: black, glassy and with an antique cream edge binding which shows off this beautiful finish particularly well. Music Man apply this binding in a different way than most makers: a channel is routed into the body blank and filled with the binding resin before it's finally shaped so that the binding is, in effect, part of the body of the instrument. The neck joint consists of a solid five-bolt fixing system, allowing a sculpted heel and comfortable access to the 12th fret and beyond.

The two-piece maple neck with its smooth rosewood fretboard has 22 immaculately fitted and polished jumbo frets and large white dot markers, just like those on a Stingray. It has a comfortable nut width of 1 5/8", the same as a contemporary Precision. Despite this it somehow feels much more slinky than the Fender, perhaps due to its flatter neck radius and profile.

The hardware here is standard Music Man, which means well-engineered, high-quality components that work without fuss and which perfectly suit the aesthetics of the bass. The bridge in particular is a brilliant piece of design: elegant, easy to use and with features such as stainless saddles and a tempered steel bridge plate, which underline the pro credentials of this bass. A quick aside here: I wish they'd go back to supplying Music Man basses with adjustable spring steel and foam rubber dampers, as they used to. It was easy to remove if not required, and worked brilliantly – especially for recording.

If you've played a Music Man bass before, there's a lot here to make you feel at home. The bass, despite that solid top bout, is a little body-heavy, which is not surprising given the almost guitar-like dimensions of the headstock and tuners. Strapped on, though, it balances well – and although it's a bit heavier than, say, a Precision, it sits level and comfortable. The gunstock oiled neck has a wonderfully tactile, satin finish, which is a real delight to hold. In my experience, this finish requires a little regular maintenance: nothing too strenuous, just frequent cleaning and perhaps an occasional light going over with fine wire wool. If you don't do this, eventually the neck will develop a hard glossy finish, much the same as if it were lacquered. Anyway, to sum up, as with all Music Man basses, the quality of materials and workmanship are first rate.

Sounds And Playability

Plug in and the bass immediately sounds naturally bright and open. It's a familiar sound, too; the Stingray DNA is obvious. Where the Reflex does differ is in its well-rounded and focused mid-range. I'm forced to conclude that this must to some degree be the result of that mahogany sound block, because when compared to the Stingray, it definitely has a richness that's absent in the original. So far, so good then – however, this is just the starting point for the Game Changer.

The controls on the bass look fairly traditional. Starting at the front, we have a volume control, and then a push/pull passive tone control. Setting this to the 'In' position puts the bass in active mode and brings into play the two stacked active tone controls, the first being treble/bass and the second hi/lo mid. Things get more interesting and unusual when we move to the five-way selector switch above. This gives you 10 different pickup configurations: five in active mode (Bank A) and five in passive mode (Bank B). As well as all this, a 'momentary' toggle switch on the top horn allows you to access up to 15 different presets. Any of these presets can be saved to a position

18+

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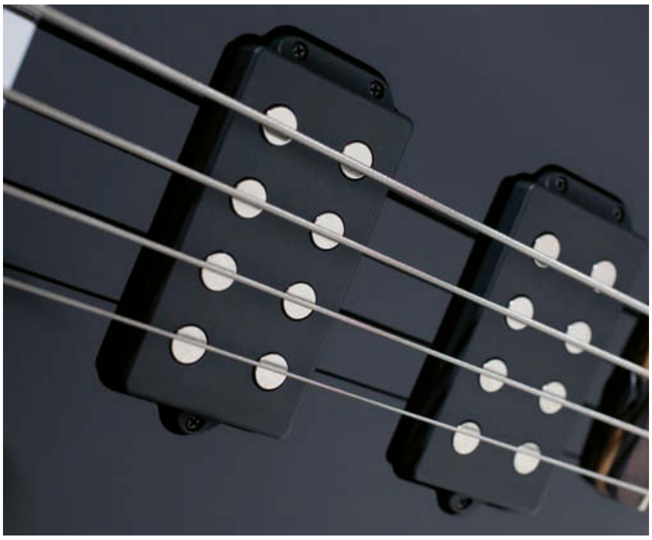

Technical Specification

Ernie Ball Music Man H/H Reflex Game Changer Bass
Price £2600
Body Ash, mahogany tone block
Neck Selected maple, gunstock oiled and waxed
Fingerboard maple/rosewood
Tuners Custom Music Man
Bridge Music Man with stainless saddles and tempered steel bridge plate
Pickups Dual humbucking with ceramic magnets
Controls Passive preamp (500kohm volume and 250kohm tone), .047μF tone capacitor, active preamp, 4-band EQ (25kohm volume, treble, high-mid, low-mid, bass), five-way selector, momentary toggle switch
Hardware Custom Music Man
Scale Length 34”

What We Think

Plus Good looking bass, hand-made in the States using the very best materials and cutting edge technology. Amazingly versatile
Minus Complex preamp and interface not to everyone’s taste. Computer connection by USB, so using an iPad on a gig isn’t possible. Slightly neck-light
Overall Even without all the switching options, the Reflex is a great bass and continues the tradition at Music Man for producing great sounding, innovative and well made instruments that are, for what they are, well priced

Contact Details

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Web www.ernieball.com/musicman

BGM Rating — Out Of Five

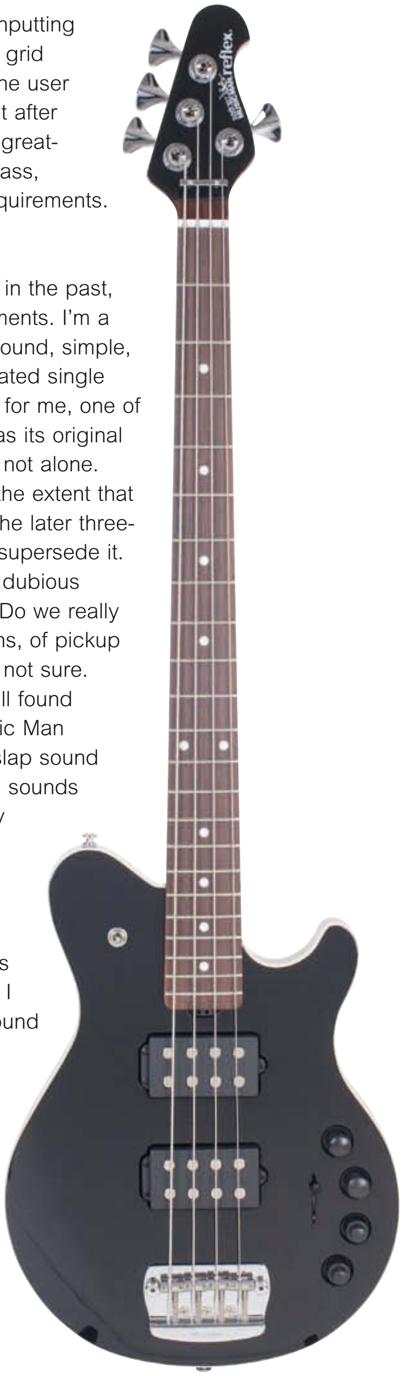
Build Quality	4
Sound Quality	4.5
Value For Money	3.5

on the selector switch by pushing down the volume for a couple of seconds, choosing the selector switch location, and then holding down the volume again, a bit like saving a radio station on your car stereo. These presets can also be changed via the MIDI input on the bass.

The impressive bit is that unlike the old Roland GR77B, which was basically a MIDI controller, and the more recent Line 6 Variax bass which used modelling technology, it does all this without any digital or modelling trickery, so the signal path stays fully analogue. In effect, it automatically rewires the pickups as you select the various options.

You’d think that all this was enough, but believe me, we’ve only just started. Downloading the Game Changer web app allows you to customise the pickup configurations of your bass however you like; on or off, series, parallel, in or out of phase and any combination thereof. As soon as you plug your bass into the computer via the supplied USB cable, the app recognises your bass’s pickup configuration (in this case, two humbuckers) and sets up the appropriate schematic and menus. It’s all fairly intuitive, and the help menus are there if you get lost.

The app has a huge menu of presets sorted into banks of genre (funk, rock and so on) and configurations favoured by Music Man endorsees: Tony Levin’s in particular are well worth trying. If you still want more, then you can start manually inputting your own presets using the graphic grid system, and saving your efforts to the user bank. The net result of all this is that after a bit of time setting up, you have a great-sounding and amazingly versatile bass, custom configured to your exact requirements.



Conclusion

I’ve had several Music Man basses in the past, and all have been wonderful instruments. I’m a big fan of their bright and punchy sound, simple, proven construction and uncomplicated single pickup and EQ. I’m no Luddite, but for me, one of the real strengths of the Stingray was its original two-band active pre-amp – and I’m not alone. Many players prefer this format, to the extent that it’s still offered as an alternative to the later three-band system that was designed to supersede it.

With all this in mind, I was a little dubious about the complexity of the Reflex. Do we really need millions, and I do mean millions, of pickup configurations at our fingertips? I’m not sure. Despite all the choice, on a gig I still found myself searching for that great Music Man fingerstyle tone, a snappy, cutting slap sound and a decent soloing tone. In short, sounds that are all available from a Stingray with just a two- or three-band EQ. They’re all there on the Reflex too, of course, plus many, many more besides, but after a few days of fun swapping sounds, making new ones and downloading them to the bass, I found myself simply enjoying the sound of the actual instrument and using the same half dozen or so tones. Perhaps in this respect the Reflex literally speaks for itself. Yes, it has that classic Stingray sound: it’s what makes up the natural tonal signature of the bass. However, it also has a massive range of your own chosen sounds available at the flick of a switch – and that, it has to be said, makes it much, much more versatile than its ancestor. ■

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TC Electronic BG250 Combo

Is this new combo from TC Electronic the shape of things to come, or just another lightweight contender? Ben 'They call him TC' Cooper finds out

It seems that the bass amplification world is concerned primarily with one thing these days: weight. Back in the mists of time, bass heads were bulky, unwieldy beasts, the kind of kit that you dreaded schlepping around almost as much as the guitarist's 4x12" cabs. There have been lightweight amps for a long time now, but the trade-off was always a lightweight sound to go with them. Not so anymore: as companies like Markbass, Aguilar and EBS have shown over recent years, it's perfectly possible to get the traditional big bass sound from a compact, light package. TC Electronic are also no strangers to the world of lightweight amps, with their Rebel 450 gaining numerous plaudits. However, when we were told of a 1x15" combo that you could easily lift with wone hand, our BS radar was suddenly on red alert. We stepped down to Def Con 2 when the courier handed over the box, but could it really be all TC claim it to be?

Build Quality And Features

First things first. If you're sceptical about the ability to one-hand lift, with relative ease, a fully featured 1x15" 250-watt combo, then stop arching that eyebrow right now. Even for this less-than-Herculean reviewer, removing the BG250 from its snug shipping carton with a single hand was a complete doddle. Not a hernia in sight, and no unattractive grunting either. The plastic carry handle is screwed into the top of the amp and is of generous proportions so it doesn't squeeze your hand, this lets you get a good grip of the amp, making lifts comfortable. At a shade under 35 pounds, it really isn't a taxing item to move.

Although the combo is indeed lightweight, it doesn't feel flimsy in the slightest. The 15" speaker and 1" tweeter are protected by a tough metal grille, to ensure that nothing gets damaged in the back of the van. The cabinet itself feels sturdy and is made from plywood, all covered in a tough Tolex covering. The combo is also front ported, and the whole thing sits on four sturdy rubber feet to give clearance from the floor.

The control panel is mounted on the top and to the rear of the panel. I like this way of situating a control panel on a combo, given their usual lack of height versus a head and cab setup. It seems somehow easier and more intuitive to make quick changes mid-gig, or even mid-song, without the need to bend over to get a look at the controls. It also means you have a clear line of sight on the tuner, too.

The controls are all self-explanatory. The three-band EQ control features your usual Bass, Mid and Treble knobs, but each one targets a range of frequencies as opposed to centring on just one. In practice, this gives a little more shaping to your tone than the usual three-band EQ.

The combo also features a tube-drive stage, which emulates both a pre-amp and power-amp valve stage. This can be switched on or off via a switch just above the tube-drive control knob. We'll talk more about how this performs later, but it might have been nice for the on/off button to be a little more definite in its action. You do get an LED which lights up when you've engaged the tube-drive, but the button itself feels a bit flimsy.

Next comes the TonePrint stage. For those unaware of TC Electronic's fantastic TonePrint pedals, they are a range of effects units which enabled endorsees to tweak the internals to get an exact sound. These settings were then uploaded to the TC website for free download, and the user can then upload them to the pedal via a USB connection, or even more cleverly via a smartphone app that transmits them to the pedal via your bass's pickups. It's a smart little gimmick and means that there are some unique takes on the usual chorus/flange/delay sounds at hand. The BG250's TonePrint stage allows you to dial in the pre-loaded TC Chorus effect, but you can then upload any TonePrint to the amp from the website. It's a neat touch, and one that echoes the ever-increasing integration of different technology platforms in the wider world. Again like the tube-drive, the TonePrint can be switched in and out via a small switch and the control dials in the amount of effect. There's a mini USB port on the amp which lets you hook it up to a computer in order to download the TonePrint of your choice.

There is also an input for an optional footswitch which allows you to engage the tube-drive and TonePrint and also mute the

amp, a handy feature for sure. The built-in tuner is set up for both four- and five-string bass and is a doddle to use: it's always on, so you can check your tuning on the fly. These are becoming increasingly prevalent on combos these days (a nod to these amps' suitability for both home practice and gigs) and it would almost be a black mark against one to not have such a feature. Likewise, the inclusion of an 'aux in' (which lets you hook up a smartphone, MP3 player and so on) and a headphone socket is a nod to the fact that the amp is aimed at the home player as well as the gigging musician.

Sound Quality

The first thing I noticed when turning the amp on was a noticeable hiss from the tweeter. As there's no attenuator for it, this is something you'll just have to learn to live with. Leaving all the controls flat, there is TC's trademark clarity to the sound. Of course, with a 15" speaker, the low end is pleasingly full, but there is also plenty of midrange definition, and that tweeter adds some bite to the proceedings. It's something of a myth that a 1x15" (tweeter or no) lacks midrange. Of course, there's not the punch of a 2x10" or a 4x10", but there's a good helping of mids and the BG250 is beefy enough to punch through.

The BG250's EQ stage allows the user to locate more or less any kind of sound. Rolling some bass on and a bit of mid yielded a pleasing rock tone, all throaty growl and thundering low end. I did feel that when adjusting for some traditional slap tone, by cutting the mid a tad and boosting the bass and treble, the highs were too harsh for my ear thanks to that tweeter. I opted to keep the treble flat and cut the mids back to about 9 o'clock, while boosting the bass to 2 o'clock to make those thumbed notes speak out.

When you begin to blend in the tube-drive you really start to get some great gritty tones. You can get just a bit of crunchy warmth (think John Paul Jones) right up to some harder drive tones. Obviously it's not quite the same as a valve amp, but after grabbing a pick and rolling in plenty of the tube-drive, I had a fantastic tone for classic rock and heavy metal.

The preloaded chorus in the TonePrint stage is instantly usable, and you can get a shimmer which is great for adding some depth to slap playing, right up to some wobbly, watery tones at the extremes. Downloading the TonePrints from TC's website is simple, and they offer a great opportunity to load in a favourite preset before heading off to a gig.

In volume terms the BG250 is pretty hefty, and even when you crank it up the speaker handles things with aplomb, only getting a tad rough-edged at its very extremes. This amp could certainly handle rehearsals and small to medium gigs, and the inclusion of a balanced XLR out means that when playing in bigger rooms it's nice and easy to run through the PA.

Conclusion

Well, hats off to TC Electronic. In the BG250 they've created a winning combo that does exactly what it purports to. The weight and its associated ease of transportation is what will interest most people, as well as its competitive pricing. When you factor in that you can get a wide variety of tones from the BG250, especially courtesy of its tube amp simulation and the included TonePrint channel, it's hard not to love it. If you're a gigging musician looking for an alternative to your bulky head and cab for those smaller gigs and rehearsals, then you've found your baby. ■

Technical Specification

TC BG250
Price £325 approx
Made In UK
Inputs 1/4-inch jack, aux in
Outputs Balanced XLR with pre/post pre-amp selector, headphone out
EQ Three band bass, mid and treble
Power 250 watts
Features Tuner, TonePrint effects stage, tube-drive valve amp emulation stage
Speakers TC Electronic custom 1x15" woofer, TC Electronic custom Piezo tweeter
Weight 15.8 kgs/35lbs (approx)
Dimensions 462mm x 620mm x 380mm/18 x 24.5 x 15 inches

What We Think

Plus Incredibly light, with a great set of features. The inclusion of the TonePrint is fantastic, and there's the usual top sound quality. Great price.
Minus That hissy tweeter.
Overall A fantastic combo that really does what it claims to do.

BGM Rating	Out Of Five
Build Quality	4.5 stars
Sound Quality	5 stars
Value For Money	5 stars

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CORNELL
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BYPASS

Cornell PedalAmp

Small and discreet it may not be, but the Cornell PedalAmp positively reeks of quality. Mike Brooks salutes this latest piece of UK-built valve engineering

In this day and age, when effect pedals for bassists are almost limitless and almost every price range is covered, it's somewhat surprising to receive this boutique piece of hardware – which, although not purpose-built for warriors of the low end, is equally applicable to bass duties as to our guitar-slinging cousins. When it comes to distortion and harmonically rich colouration of your tone, there is no substitute for valve technology, plain and simple. The Cornell PowerAmp is not your off-the-shelf, mass produced stompbox, but instead a meticulously designed piece of craftsmanship incorporating two 12AX7 (ECC83) pre-amp valves and a single EL84 power valve alongside mains and output transformers on the outer chassis.

First impressions are that this is a ruggedly assembled piece of kit. Picking the unit up, you soon realise how weighty it is, and were you to incorporate this into a pedalboard, you would want to ensure you placed it in the line of attack correctly at the first time of asking. The front carry handle, polished metal chassis and 'chicken-head' controls give this a very solid look and feel: the controls all turn very smoothly and the stomp buttons offer a very reassuring click. The PedalAmp is marketed as having a variety of uses: as a pedal, as a pre-amp for recording and as an amp in its own right. But don't be fooled into thinking you could use this unit for running your whole bass rig on a gig, as it only provides 4 watts of tube-driven output power to an 8-ohm speaker.

With its variety of potential uses and applications, it is reassuring to see that a number of outputs have been provided in addition to the main controls, making the PedalAmp as versatile as possible. With the pre-requisite input and output sockets on either side of the unit, the desk output can be used for connection to an external mixer (ie for recording or PA reinforcement purposes) while the rear of the unit houses speaker and headphone outputs (for private practice). The mains socket and power button are followed by two 9-volt DC outputs, should you wish to utilise the pedal's power to fuel additional pedals. Although the output and mains transformers detract from the appearance of the pedal, they physically need to be there and the placement of the valves on top means that they are cooled and protected by a vented casing – so there is no reason why they should be damaged by knocks and scrapes in a live setting, and they should be well-ventilated, therefore preventing any overheating.

In terms of control layout, it couldn't be any simpler, with controls for Gain, Bass, Treble, Master Output and Balance In/Out and two stomp buttons for Boost and Bypass. The Gain control dictates the volume of the pre-amp and the resulting level of distortion coming from the 12AX7 valves. The Bass and Treble controls affect the amount of low and high frequency boost to the signal, and the Master Output controls the volume level to all outputs from the pedal: it also works with the Gain control in adjusting the overall level of distortion. The Balance In/Out switch keeps the pre-amp and output voltage equal, which in turn affects the output distortion and helps to maintain a clean signal if required. The Boost switch increases the gain but has a pre-determined tone, thus rendering the tone controls ineffective, while the Bypass switch has a dual purpose in taking a clean signal from the pedal or, if not connected to an amp, acting as a mute switch.

As with any pedal, experimentation is the name of the game, and the PedalAmp is no different in that respect. Distortion is very much a matter of taste and often requires quite a bit of tweaking to hit the sweet spot, but built as it is with the finest of components, the PedalAmp makes the job an intuitive experience. With only a few controls to play with, in theory it should be a case of finding a tone you like with the tone controls,

> "At a little under £700, this is a serious investment and some may question spending that sort of money on a pedal that may have limited use, particularly if distortion is an effect you use sparingly."

adjusting the Gain to dial in the required amount of distortion before applying the Output level, and adjusting the Gain and Output controls to fine-tune the desired signal.

We used the PedalAmp in both home and live settings and were pleasantly surprised by how good the settings at home translated into a live gig situation. Plugging in, an initial period of silence as the valves warm up is followed by a warm but lively signal, and setting the tone controls to 50 per cent, the bass tone was very useable – although we did notice that passive basses certainly sounded warmer, as you would expect. To keep things simple, the active basses were kept to one side, not wishing to complicate matters with bass EQ circuitry. Although this unit isn't specifically designed for bass, it certainly gives a good account of itself and conveys a thickly-coloured bass signal. Selecting the Bypass option gave a clear indication of the differences between the natural clean signal and the overall tone provided by the pedal, and there was no disputing the warm, bell-like tone provided by the valves: the

overall sound is colourful and alive. The initial rasp when attacking the strings adds real character to your tone, and digging into your favourite bass-lines highlights how a different playing approach can shed new light on a part you know well.

The Boost option takes away some of the bottom end, producing a honky, nasal tone, which is useful if a little extra clarity is required for tapping, percussive styles or screaming pinch harmonics à la Billy Sheehan. Switching the Balance control to Out also altered the sound by adding more presence and attack: the level of background noise also increased, but this was not a major issue. If you're a bass player whose sound revolves around distortion, this pedal could well open up several new possibilities in terms of how you record or even play live, especially if you are thinking of ditching a sizeable live rig for in-ear monitoring, as the tube performance from this pedal is quite something.

Boutique hand-assembled equipment usually carries an equally boutique price-tag, and the Cornell PedalAmp is no exception. At a little under £700, this is a serious investment and some may question spending that sort of money on a pedal that may have limited use, particularly if distortion is an effect you use sparingly. On the other hand, tone freaks out there who are always looking for the pinnacle of tone and will spend big bucks to get it may see this as a wise investment. Bear in mind that this isn't a bass-specific unit – although we hear that a bass-friendly version is very much on the cards, so why not try one out, see if it works for you and if not, compare it with the bass version when it arrives? ■

Technical Specification

Cornell PedalAmp
Price £690
Made In UK
Features Gain, bass, treble, balance in/balance out, master output, boost, bypass
Dimensions 167 x 290 x 137mm
Weight 3.6kg

What We Think

Plus Solidly constructed and well thought out, it certainly looks the part and delivers valve distortion in spades
Minus Very expensive, not bass-specific and there should be a carry case for this price
Overall If genuine valve distortion is your thing, the PedalAmp is well worth checking out – and you get what you pay for

Contact Details

Email den_cornell@dc-developments.com
Web www.dc-developments.com

BGM Rating — Out Of Five

Build Quality	★★★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★☆
Value For Money	★★★☆☆

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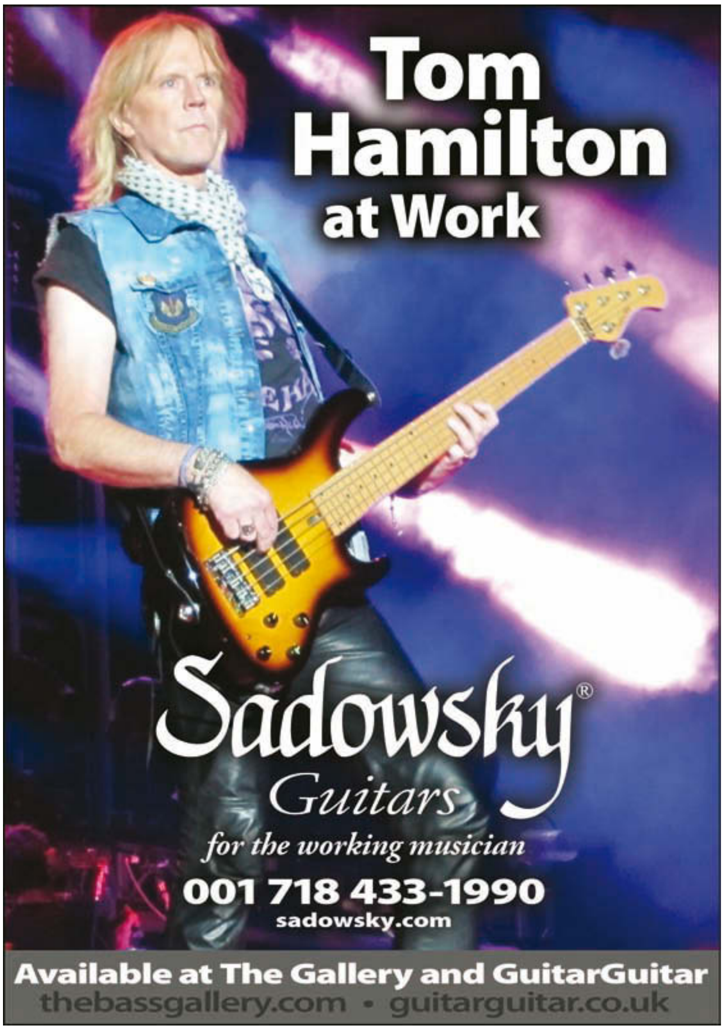
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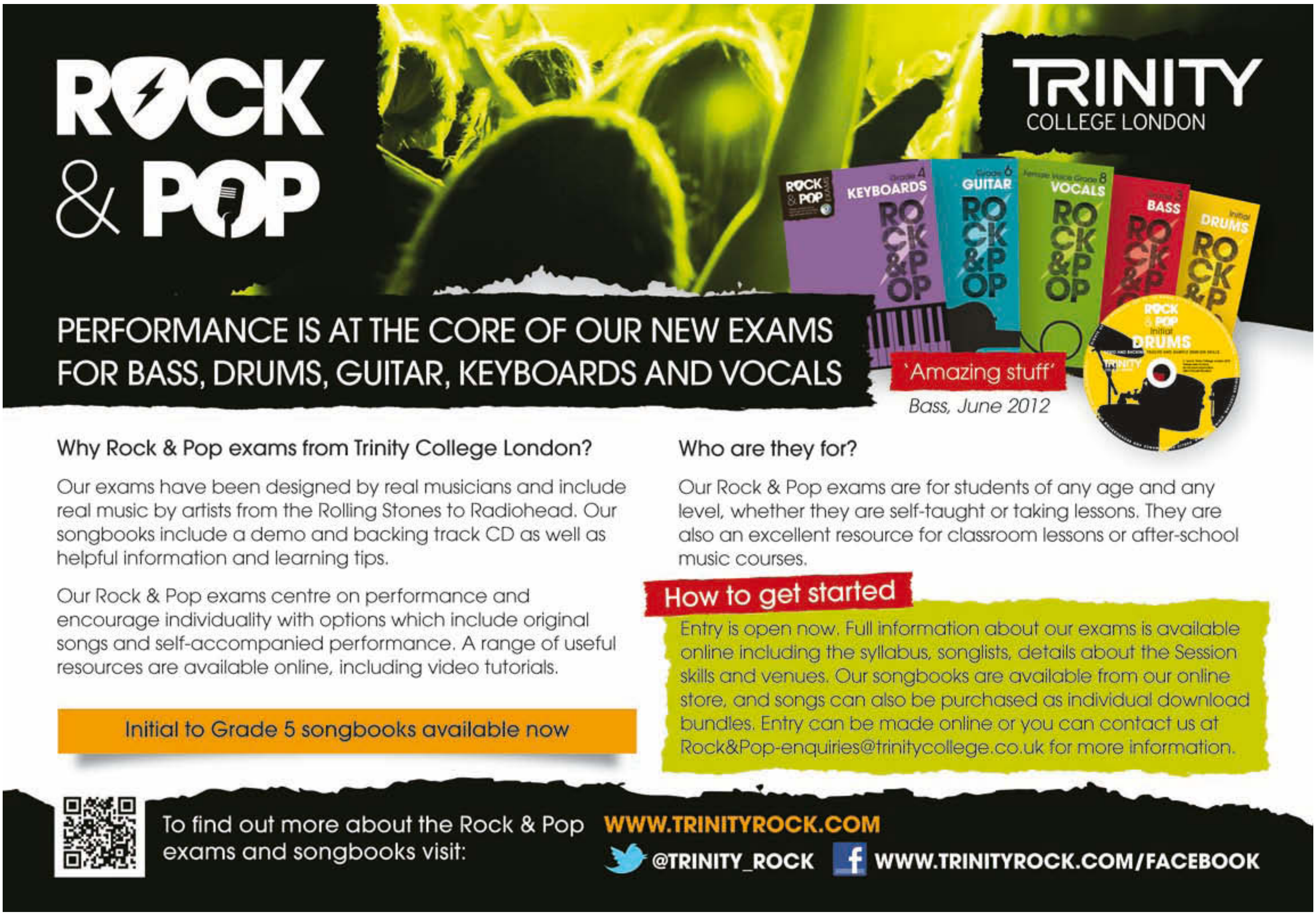
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The Woodshed

Serbian bass-maker Zoran Pantic invites Joel McIver into his workshop

Serbia, a country finally emerging from the turmoil that racked it in the 1990s and beyond, is not a territory often visited by bass players in search of high-quality instruments – but Pantic & Son is on a mission to change that. Zoran Pantic, whose workshop is located in the town of Smederevska Palanka in central Serbia, got in touch with *BGM* recently and, as we're supporters of bass culture wherever it may be, we invited him to talk about his business.

"Where did I get the idea to create a guitar?" says Pantic. "I'd have to go back to my early childhood. As a little boy I watched my friend's father making a guitar, and what fascinated me the most was the moment that I first heard its sound. From that moment, the guitar was like a living thing for me."

Asked how his career led him into bass-making, Pantic explains, "I was a geodetic engineer by profession [a chap who measures mountains, lakes and what have you – Careers Advice Ed], but I was always interested in art. I like creating art with wood and clay, and drawing with a graphite pencil. I worked for three years as a geodesist, and at the end of that time I decided to fully dedicate myself to the processing of wood. Initially my intention was to produce unique furniture."

Guitars soon took over, though, he adds: "I used to make furniture, and it was beautiful, but I always missed the sound of the guitar in my ears, and I found myself thinking about building a guitar. One day I told my son, 'Daddy's going to make you a guitar', and he replied, 'It's not the same as building a chair, you know…'"

Inspired, Pantic applied pen to paper. "I had to start drawing again," he says, "because I wanted my guitar to appear innovative, but also unlike any recognisable form that is already available. Designing the body shape took about six months. In that time I also bought the necessary tools, and modified other tools that I already had. Eventually the moment came for me to realise a dream that I'd had from my childhood."

Right off the bat, Pantic met with some success, presumably assisted by his background in art and engineering, the two disciplines essential for any luthier. "First I made a fretless bass," he recalls, "and soon after that, I built two more. I asked several musicians for their opinion, and they all agreed that the instruments were pretty good. In fact, some of them even wanted to buy my guitars. That encouraged me a lot, and really gave me the strength to continue."

As the photos display, Pantic has created a highly professional workshop: no mean feat when your business isn't located near a major commercial centre. As he explains, his basses are assembled by a combination of machine and manual work. "The process of making a guitar is quite long," he says, "and usually lasts for about a month. I do the final work by hand, and this is the part that gives me the most satisfaction out of the entire process. I use materials from the local environment, such as ash, maple, walnut and cherry wood. The front panels of my basses are made from ash, while maple makes up the middle section, and finally I use cherry or walnut for the rest of the body."

But as all bassists know, the neck design of a bass often has the biggest impact on how comfortable it is to play, and Pantic has definitely not neglected this fact. "The necks are usually made of maple," he continues, "or sometimes I combine maple with ash. I use wild pear tree wood for the fingerboards. For the decorative details, I work with mahogany and semsir, which is a local European tree. The bodies of all my guitars are hollow, so that the middle part of the solid material, and the left and right chambers, have openings. The neck and body are assembled with glue to make one unit: the neck on all my guitars is a V shape. To finish, I use nitrocellulose lacquer, and sometimes a special oil when I want to emphasise the beauty of the wood."

Finally, Pantic's guitars come to life in the last stages of the manufacturing process, he tells us. "When the neck is completely functional, machine heads are installed and I add the bridge and strings. From that moment on, the guitar comes alive, and you can hear its character. I then determine the final position of the pickup magnets so that they'll produce the best possible sound. Also at this time, I usually get the name of the guitar in my head, and this creates a final image of what it should look like."

So where can *BGM* readers buy Pantic basses? Zoran can be contactly directly at pantic.zoran@yahoo.com. While lucky readers in Japan can purchase his basses via www.apollonmusic.com/pantic, UK distribution is still needed. Go ahead and drop him a line, distributors! ■

CHRIS HANBY

Chris has amassed a staggering amount of insightful, interesting and sometimes irrelevant information on bass guitar equipment during his career as a professional bassist. Some would say it's a gift, others that he is a nerd, either way we continue to push boxes of electronics under his nose and make him report to us on his favourites.

Subdecay Prometheus DLX

The Prometheus, one of the best and most bass-friendly filters from boutique legend Subdecay, now has a deluxe version. Let's see if, like its Titan namesake, it can educate humanity (well, us bassists anyway) and, unlike our liver-depleted hero, deliver new and funky sounds for all eternity.

History

Subdecay Studios have been producing boutique effects pedals in Newberg, Oregon for the best part of the last decade. The founder and brains behind these unique creations is Brian Marshall. His early stomps included the Liquid Sunshine Overdrive, the Flying Tomato Fuzz (praised by bassists for its bias control, allowing the use of active basses), the Blackstar Distortion and the Quasar phaser. These all adhered strongly to the Subdecay ethos of maximum functionality with simple controls, allowing the player to enjoy all the build quality and tone of a boutique product, without having to spend hours learning and tweaking the controls. Marshall has built on the early success of these units, adding a range of filters, echo/reverb units and synth fuzz pedals. Most recently we have seen the DLX (which stands for deluxe) versions of the Quasar phaser and Prometheus filter added to the line.

In Use

I was very keen to try this pedal out, having heard many good reports from other bass players on its predecessor, the original Prometheus. At first glance it appears to have fewer controls than the non-DLX version, but I soon realised that the range of filtering options would satisfy even the geekiest of knob-twiddling filter freaks.

The PDLX takes its inspiration from vintage analogue synths. It is a VCA (voltage controlled amplifier) based filter that, like its vintage cousins, spans a broader frequency spectrum than your usual touch wah pedal. This means it has much more harmonic content and therefore a richer sound.

To begin with, I took the unusual step reading the manual. I'm glad I did, though. It explains exactly how to use all the functions of the PDLX, along with a brilliant overview of the filters. I would advise any potential buyers to download the manual from the Subdecay website for a full explanation of the pedal.

I started my journey by dialling up a typical envelope follower. Setting the switch to Low Pass and tweaking the familiar Freq, Depth and Res knobs, I quickly arrived at a lush, quacky filter tone perfect for classic P-Funk lines. Setting the envelope to the down position and trimming the same three knobs again, Mu-Tron-type raygun textures soon emanated from my amp. For most filter pedals this is where the review would end. Not so with the PDLX: we've barely scratched the surface of what this thing can do.

Your options really open up once you begin to change the settings of the other, less familiar controls. Both the Shape and Mode have 11 different positions. These are categorised into three distinct groupings for Shape and four for Mode. While this might seem a bit daunting, it is very well laid out and the pictures of the waveforms illustrate the movement of the different filter settings very well. Looking first at the Shape control, the two Analogue Envelope settings (white arrows) are the usual envelope filter settings. Moving clockwise, you can select between seven different LFO types. These open and close the filter at tempos which you set by tapping the footswitch. This offers a range of tremolo/gating options. These can be multiplied up to four times by adjusting the Mode knob. A nice feature is the LED, which changes colour as the filter opens and closes, giving a visual cue as to what you are hearing. Selecting one of the four Mode groups controls the intensity and rate of the LFO: there are STEP (filter), Trig (trigger LFO), Man (manual LFO) and Warp (LFO). The functions of the Tap/Hold and Warp control change depending on what combination of Shape and Mode you are using.

The Special Envelope shape changes the speed of the LFO depending on how hard you attack the string, with the Warp control allowing you to fine-tune the oscillation. In arrow up position the speed decreases as the note decays, and in down position it increases as the note decays, an unusual effect I hadn't come across before.

You've also got an Expression pedal input, allowing you to adjust the filters manually. A handy addition for bassists is an internal switch to add dry signal to the bandpass filter. This is a brilliant idea, as the bandpass setting is typically redundant to us otherwise.

Conclusion

Having spent some time with this unit, I find the sheer number of options astonishing. If you're in need of a filter pedal for all occasions, you really need look no further than the Prometheus DLX. It goes way beyond the ability to mimic the bygone filters of the 70s. The only boundary is your own creativity. ■

Availability

The Subdecay Prometheus DLX is available from www.joespedals.com for **£239.**

Alternatives

Filter pedals are abundant, but to find something of the calibre of the Prometheus DLX in terms of functions and form factor is impossible. The only product that even comes close is the Source Audio Bass Envelope Filter Pro, for £200. It has many of the step filter modes, the ability to save six presets, plus in-built EQ and USB connectivity. The BEF Pro has some unique features and covers a lot of ground as far as filters go, but it still can't do all that the Subdecay can.

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The FrontLine

In a brand-new series, *BGM* brings you advice, tips and tales of on-the-road craziness written by actual working bassists, all of which are designed to make you a better player

The Jazz Bassist

RUTH GOLLER

Upright specialist Ruth warns you about the dangers of a dodgy playing position

Posture is something I have been thinking about a lot in the last three years. When I first picked up the double bass, having only played electric bass for years, I practised too much straight away and without proper guidance. I thought I understood the instrument and approached it the same way as the electric bass, and shortly after, my right wrist started to ache – and then my journey through dealing with pain began! I stopped playing the double bass and tried again as soon as my pain had slightly eased: in the meantime I was determined to find its cause, and tried every possible treatment I could find. I was surprised that almost every musician I spoke to had had to deal with some sort of playing-related strain or pain at some point in their lives, but it's something that few of us try to prevent. I got quite confused by all the different prognoses and advice I got, but I'm glad I tried every single one, because now I can see how many of these therapies are related. It was important for me not to rule anything out. One therapy I particularly responded to is the Alexander Technique, a way of learning how to undo posture habits and to get rid of body tensions. I think every musician should practise this, not only to ease or prevent pain, but also to improve the sound on their instrument.

I thought a lot about the posture I use while playing electric bass, because that seemed to be the cause for my suffering when I picked up the double bass. I observed many players and realised how badly bent most electric bass players' wrists are, especially if they wear their bass high, so I tried to position my bass so that both of my wrists were as straight as possible. This involved lowering the body and pushing the neck a bit higher so it pointed upwards. I was also told that holding up the weight of the instrument on one shoulder, as conventional straps tend to do, causes my shoulders and wrists to hurt and is generally bad for any player's posture. My solution was to make a strap that I fastened around my waist and attached the bass to it. It took me a long time to figure out the right design, and then get used to a new way of playing – but in this way, I have no weight on my shoulder, and can now play pain-free.

http://soundcloud.com/ruth-goller

The Metalhead

PAOLO GREGOLETTO

Trivium bassist Paolo advises on getting those fingers fast

Warming up is a must for any serious player. It has been a routine drilled into my head from years of playing sports as well as four years of music lessons. Just as you wouldn't do a full-on sprint without stretching, you shouldn't just play a show full-on without warming up your hands. I've heard horror stories of bass players cramping up while playing, or worse, getting arthritis or tendonitis in the long term from the constant repetitive movements. After a few years of getting used to the added pressure of having other important obligations apart from playing and partying, I've determined that my magic amount of time for a proper warm-up is about 15 minutes. To some this might seem like very little, but remember, there's a difference between practising and warming up. I may jam an hour or two before the show, but once you've cooled off from playing you're back to square one. Also, warming up for two hours and then playing a two-hour show is not advisable, in my opinion. Hitting the stage already fatigued will do you no good. That's why 15 minutes before we play, I make sure I have my bass strapped on and I'm focused on this quick routine.

© Scott Uchida

I've made my warm-up check-list very simple: Is my right hand ready? Is my left hand ready? Are both hands in unison timing-wise? Simple enough, but let me break those down a bit more so you have an idea of how it works. Each section of the routine should last about five minutes. First, I make sure my right hand is warm by starting with quarter and eighth notes, gradually increasing the intensity. I avoid anything much faster than that at first. Working on each string for a few seconds, I will go low to highest and vice versa. My right hand is always the tightest, so starting with that hand gives me a full 15 minutes to warm it up. For the left hand I focus mostly on chromatic movements, both horizontally and diagonally, shifting up and down the neck in half-step increments. I'm still only using quarter and eighth notes for these exercises. Once the final five minutes are on the clock, I shift gears from warming up to actually playing some songs or even some polyrhythmic passages. The reason I do this is to really sync both hands together for more complex movements, and to make sure that my right hand is fully ready to rock. This is when I might start playing a little faster or harder in the warm-up, sort of testing out the water. As the warm-up ends, we're usually just seconds away from hitting the stage and I'm totally ready to go into whichever tune we're opening the set with that night.

www.trivium.org

The Alternative Rocker

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

The Therapy? low-end supremo explains why bass is the place to be

I had the classic London cabbie experience a few months ago, which some of you will know only too well. Seeing me hop in with a guitar case, he soon started the inevitable questions. Once we'd established that yes, I was a musician, no, he hadn't heard of me, and no, I didn't know Robbie Williams, he actually asked what instrument I played. His blank look and rounding up of the conversation when I said "bass guitar" is a situation that occurs only too often. His expression basically asked, "why bass?" What is it about bass guitar that, to the masses, doesn't instil the kind of reaction or curiosity that singers, guitarist and drummers do (I'm omitting keyboardists, DJs and kazoo players out of the equation for simplicity's sake). Does the old stereotype of the bass guitar being boring still stand? I suppose in a rock band the bassist stereotype or cliché is that we're the least 'exciting' to a passing punter – people tend to think that guitarists are more talented (no, they're psychotic control freaks); singers have better hair (they're just narcissists); and drummers have more personality (they're party animals). I mean, back in the day, John Deacon wouldn't have been the first member of Queen you'd choose to invite to a dinner party, would he? Mind you, if you focus on his chops, songwriting and vocal skills the man is nigh-on untouchable, and you'd soon forgive him for not being the king of small talk.

If someone asks me "why do you play bass?" I always explain, with tongue slightly in cheek, that I'm playing with the drummer, locking into the beat and also complementing the melody and chords along with the vocalist and guitarist. I'm doing two tricky jobs: I need to get my rhythm and my melody right. I'm the multi-task king, walking a fine line. I aim to be chunky, groovy and driving, and to help heat and keep that beat. That's why I play bass, Mr Cabbie. Then I'll refer you to a charismatic, talented bassist like Cliff Burton or Bootsy Collins, who'll happily confound any bass player stereotypes you may have.

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

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The Extended-Range Specialist

STEWART MCKINSEY

Ten-string-wielder Stu says it's OK, don't be scared of that thing he's holding...

It's an honour for me to contribute to *BGM* and I hope to help you develop as an extended-range bass player. Let's start with stretching. Warm up every time you play. It's easy to injure yourself, but it can be even more easily prevented. Make it a habit, whenever you pick up the bass, to spend some time on a few finger exercises rather than just tearing up the instrument immediately. I've seen great players hurt themselves needlessly, ending up with tendonitis or carpal tunnel syndrome.

Muting is paramount with an extended-range instrument of any sort. You can use everything from hair ties and ponytail holders to products specifically designed for the purpose, but don't overlook your fingers, your arms, the sleeves of your shirts… whatever works is absolutely valid, but you will need to develop your muting. It's easy to make sound, but harder to make the sounds you want to make.

Now to the extended-range fretboard. This does not have to be daunting! Start with something that you love to play: a bass part, melody, chord progression or riff. Feel how they are different on this particular bass. You don't want to start by staring at your hands and feeling self-conscious or overly analytical. If you're looking at that massive expanse of wood and all those frets for the first time, it's easy to get intimidated or lost. Relax your way into the extended range as much as possible. When you are comfortable with this, try moving to a different spot on the neck, an octave higher, an octave lower – or even in the same octave but somewhere else on the fingerboard. But start with something familiar as your way of learning your way around the new landscape.

Each extended-range instrument has its own feel and character. Try to keep this in mind. As you begin to play more and you learn to play without scrutinising everything you do, you can start to explore what you and the ERB can do together. We are all students, all the time. It's dangerous to think you have to be amazing right out of the gate. Cut yourself some slack: you're starting something new.

www.facebook.com/pages/Stew-McKinsey/12018239044

Alex Claber

Alex first picked up a bass when studying engineering at university, spending countless hours rehearsing, recording and gigging in a succession of original alt-rock/funk bands. His quest for sonic perfection led him to apply his engineering skills to loudspeaker design, establishing Barefaced Audio in 2008.

This column is brought to you in association with Barefaced Ltd, who manufacture high-output lightweight speaker cabs for the gigging bassist in their micro-factory in Brighton and export these cutting-edge models globally. An extensive archive of previous articles can be found at www.barefacedbass.com. Barefaced have finally launched their radical '69er 6x10" cab, designed to emulate the awesome tone of the original late-60s fridge cabs, but with better dispersion, greater power handling and much lower weight.

If you have any questions regarding this article or suggestions for future articles, please contact Alex at bgm@barefacedbass.com.

ALEX CLABER

Barefaced Bass

Alex Claber delves into the murky world of cabinets. Warning: here be monsters

A personal source of puzzlement for me is the obsession humanity has with pigeonholing products based on superficial characteristics. It's probably a behavioural pattern that has proven successful for survival, allowing you to form tribes based on visual similarities, and thus live longer and reproduce more than if remaining independent. And just as we naturally err towards tribalism (with all its myriad negative connotations) among ourselves, our consumerist lifestyles cause us to create tribes based upon the products we buy – from Apple fanboys globally (iFans or Maconistas?) to Ford versus Chevy drivers in the US, or Mercedes versus BMW car owners in Germany.

From a marketing perspective, this tendency is an excellent thing. Not only does it tie in neatly with product loyalties, so you can repeatedly sell the same person new products as their previous purchases wear out, become obsolete or prove too dated and unfashionable: you can also drive consumption through industry-wide campaigns pushing new standards. A excellent current example is the mountain biking industry, which tells consumers that bigger wheels will make them ride faster and better and be more attractive to the gender of their choice. Rather than encouraging consumers to stay in manufacturer X's tribe, every mainstream manufacturer is convincing their tribe that a paradigm shift is the only way to stay competitive. TV is the same: "HD – it's the future!" "3D – it's the future!" "Garlic bread – it's the future!" As an engineer who would admittedly like to sell products, I look upon this game with a combination of wry amusement and frustration, as marketers push their new shiny toy with exciting, misinformation-filled buzzwords.

And so we come to loudspeakers. Bigger equals more bass, says the old marketing view. Big speakers look impressive, so they must sound impressive. The curious thing is that we're so used to having our opinion dominated by our eyes, that they sometimes override what our ears are hearing. A good friend of mine was watching a certain classy TV show with the witty catchphrase, "No likey, no lighty", and told me of an incident where a six-foot-something farmer type came out of the "love lift" and addressed the ladies in a fairly high-pitched voice. One of them commented that she liked a big man with a deep voice like him – so eyes see big, tell brain ears will hear deep, ears report back to the contrary, brain ignores ears because eyes are all important.

However, as many bass cabs (not just our Barefaced ones) have shown, speakers don't have to be big to sound big. But if your eyes tell you that a cab is going to sound big because it has big speakers, then your brain's interpretation of your ears will be prejudiced – this is why blind tests can be rather good, but is also why they are rare as they tend to shoot down too many marketing campaigns – thus killing advertising revenue.

So when we think of going bass cab shopping, the most common approach is to decide what configuration of loudspeakers is wanted and then find the most suitable example that fits within those criteria. This is why the interweb being full of 'What 4x10" for me?' or 'What 1x12" for me?' threads. Something rarely seen in bass magazines are group tests, which have been a staple of car magazines since pioneered by CAR in the late 60s – 'hot hatches head to head', 'sports saloon shoot-out', and other appropriate alliterations. But when you think about the public's car-buying habits, does that pigeonholing make sense?

tLast year CAR ran a different group test where they put the new Range Rover Evoque (lifestyle faux offroader) up against the Mini Countryman (ditto), the BMW 3 series touring (mid-sized premium estate), the Golf GTI (premium hot hatch), the Audi TT (sports coupé) and the Peugeot RCZ (ditto) – in other words, six fairly practical, fairly fast, fairly decent-handling and fairly stylish cars that are far from inexpensive. Each of them solves a similar problem, but in a different way – and, as most high-value car purchases are want- rather than need-driven, aesthetics tend to override practicalities.

The two standard groupings I've seen in purchasers' minds are the "I want a cab from manufacturer Z because I want that characteristic brand Z sound" or the "I want a cab with AxB" speakers because I think B" diameter speakers have more punch than C" diameter speakers, but more bottom than D" diameter speakers". It usually seems to be a decision which the consumer thinks is based on tone, but is not: if a manufacturer makes more than one loudspeaker cab it almost guarantees that there is no characteristic sound.

The classic example is the Ampeg sound. What is it, really? I've heard lots of Ampeg cabs, and the only one that sounds like an Ampeg 8x10" is the sealed 8x10" – they've done ported 8x10"s with tweeters in the past which sound absolutely nothing like an Ampeg 8x10" despite being an actual Ampeg 8x10". Their 410HLF is about as far removed tonally as a 10" bass guitar cab can be from another 10" bass guitar cab, albeit not in a bad way: it's a great cab but it's way more bottom-heavy and mid-shy than a sealed 8x10". Yes, there are often similarities

within model ranges and there may be common philosophies, but consistent tonal signatures are vanishingly rare.

The second and dominant group is the "I want to buy a 4x10" (or other configuration of your choice)" concept. Again, this is based on assumptions from hearing other cabs with equal or different-sized speakers and assuming that equal diameter speakers will have consistent tone, or that bigger speakers will sound deeper and fatter and that smaller speakers will sound punchier and brighter. But it doesn't work like that: the cone diameter is a very small part of the puzzle.

So here's some practical advice. Choose your cabs based on two criteria: tone and loudness. Obviously there are practical considerations such as moving them and fitting them in your car, house and life, but you can probably work those out for yourself. How do you decide what will get you the tone you need? Hear them at gigs, try them at jam sessions, read magazine reviews, browse and post on forums, try them in shops, ask reputable online retailers for advice, and so on, while always bearing in mind that so much of your tone comes from how you play, then the bass you play, and then the amp you're powering the cab with: it's an interactive puzzle.

> "Choose your cabs based on two criteria: tone and loudness."

How do you know which cab will be loud enough? Well the only spec that will reliably tell you how loud a bass cab will play is the volume displacement, which is its ability to move air – the thermal power handling spec tends to be useless, as almost all bass cabs start distorting before you reach the thermal limits – and unless you're from the Lemmy school of tone, that kind of bass sound won't do for all your gigs.

The loudness you'll get out of a bass cab obviously depends on how powerful your amp is – the larger the cab, the smaller the amp you'll need to get it to a given loudness. I can't say this enough times: the bigger a cab, the easier it is to drive and the fewer watts you need. Anyone who tells you that their amp is so powerful it can drive even a big cab like an 8x10" (rated at 1200W thermally) with ease doesn't know what they're talking about. The greater the volume displacement of a cab (rated in cubic centimetres), the more power the cab can handle, so the bigger an amp you can use.

Going back to our group test idea, you'll see in the photo that the cars are marked up as different bass cab configurations. They're obviously different physically and visually, but they get you to the same place – they can achieve similar sounds and they can produce those sounds loud enough. The smaller ones will need more power than the larger ones to reach that loudness, but if they can handle the power then that's all good. The ones with bigger speakers or bigger enclosures may have more bottom with your EQ flat, or they may not – it will vary on a case-by-case basis. Bear in mind that in the 70s, the standard configuration for a practical family car was a four-door 'three box' saloon such as a Ford Cortina, but over the next 40 years that configuration changed to a five-door 'two box' hatchback such as a Ford Sierra and then to a five-door 'one box aka monospace' MPV like a Citroen Picasso).

So why should we still be using standard configurations? They still work fine, but technology has moved on and others may work better – you might as well see if you're missing out.

PG'S TIPS

In a new column this month, Paul Geary of the Academy Of Contemporary Music has some invaluable tips for you on choosing gear and honing performance skills

Paul Geary

Paul Geary graduated with honours from both Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Musician's Institute of Technology in Los Angeles. He is one of the UK's foremost studio bassists, an active session musician and musical director. He has recorded and toured with artists including Jools Holland, George Michael, Simply Red, Chris Rea, Nik Kershaw, Donny and Marie Osmond, The Lighthouse Family, Liberty X, Geri Halliwell, Sophie Ellis Bextor, Rachel Stevens, Mary J. Blige and Westlife. As well as this, he still finds time to head up the Academy Of Contemporary Music's bass school.

Contact Paul at paulmarkgeary@googlemail.com and visit www.paulgeary.com for more information.

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ROTOSOUND

ORANGE

Overwater BASSES

I'd like to spend a little time sharing some tips and pointers on basic performance skills. At the top of my list is 'sound'. Every performance has to sound good. I see and hear a lot of great players, whether at gigs or at the ACM in Guildford. They all have great technique, but that doesn't always mean they will automatically have a great sound and tone. What I'm talking about is EQ.

Let's start with the bass. Get to know what your bass can and can't do. I sometimes come across students who have no idea about what the controls do on their instruments. Every bass is different: each will have volume, treble, and bass controls and even pickup selection. Then we enter the realms of pre-amps, active circuitry and the various pickup types, all delivering different sound and tone.

My advice is to try as many different basses as possible and choose the one that best suits your playing style, and quite simply feels the best to you. This is a starting point. Personally, I use Overwater basses, which can pretty much do anything. I string my basses with Rotosound SM 66 stainless steel Swing Bass strings, using medium gauge – .40, .60, .80, .100 and .125 for the low B. Early on, I tried many different types of strings and brands, but again it comes down to personal preference. The way the strings feel and play under you fingers is essential for getting your tone together. At the end of the day, your tone is in your hands and fingers.

Next is your amplification. Over the years my amps have become more and more basic. I currently use Orange Amplification. I have an OBC 410 cab with an AD200B MK111 head. Each amp head has had a pretty simple EQ. I went through a phase early on using many graphics and various effect processors, offering hundreds of sounds, and then ended up using only two or three presets. Ridiculous! I like amps with a valve pre-amp and solid-state capability, but I'm really enjoying the depth, warmth and clarity of an all-valve head. Again, it's down to personal preference, but I think you need a bit of punch along with some warmth and depth that only valves can deliver. I have also just got my hands on a Terror Bass 500W 2x12" combo, which uses the new Isobaric

loudspeaker concept of mounting two lightweight Neodymium speakers behind each other in the cabinet. This allows for a much smaller cab, but maximum power. The amp is a 500W hybrid with a valve pre-amp.

I have gone back to pedal effects, with a pedal board. I am not a fan of multi-effects processors. Some of them offer a vast array of sounds, but in real playing situations they are very limiting. My favourite pedals at the moment are my Q-Tron envelope filter and my faithful Sansamp. I also have an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff that delivers a great, overdriven sound – very Muse. For slapping you need some good compression; a lot of amps offer this within their EQ settings. Again, I used to use rack-mounted compression units and tuners. Many amps today offer all of this integration within the unit itself. A quick word about tuners: don't use rack-mounts for live playing situations. They always mean that at some point you will have to turn around to tune, which means turning your back on the audience – a big no-no. Get a good pedal tuner that mutes everything and stick it in your chain of effects. I've used Boss in the past but I've just bought a new TC Electronic Polytune tuner, which is amazing. It has a strobe on it, which enables you to strum all the strings at the same time: this allows you to adjust only the strings that are out of tune, and do it quickly and effectively.

It goes without saying – but I'm going to anyway! – don't ever tune on stage without first being muted: that is a sackable offence. I did it once as a student at Berklee. There I was, just about to play in my live performance workshop. The guitarist gave me an A tuning-note and the next thing I knew I was getting off the stage, realising that A was the only note I had played. The instructors had ordered the whole band off stage. Oh, the shame! I never made that mistake again. Be warned, any of you wanting to study at college, especially at the ACM – make sure you're always in tune.

Once you have a good sound backed up with technique, it's time to think about your stage presence. It's all about feeling comfortable on stage. You can't do that if you have problems with your sound, or if you just feel uncomfortable in your own skin. Many things can affect the way you feel. Making a mistake, for example, has affected whole shows for me in the past. You just have to put the error behind you and press on. Don't make a big deal of it by pulling a face and drawing attention to the fact that you screwed up. The fact is that everyone makes mistakes; you just have to practise and believe that next time you won't make the same one.

Think about your posture, too. This can lead to long-term medical problems. It's important that you are not forcing a part of your body to do something that is bad for it. It always saddens me when a student comes to me saying that he or she has tendonitis or some other repetitive strain injury. If your hand hurts when playing, stop! Try not to tense up when you play. I see some players doing this when they are playing fast. The only way you can play fast and smoothly is by being relaxed. Try practising while looking at yourself in a mirror, or video yourself. This is not vanity, and you'll possibly be shocked by what you see. I always wear my bass so that the angle of it doesn't change whether I'm standing up or sitting down. In the past I couldn't work out why I couldn't play things as well when I was standing – but then I looked at the angle of my bass, which was all wrong when I was sitting down.

Always wear a strap when you're practising in a seated position. That way, the angle of your bass should stay the same and feel the same when you're standing up.

Next month: Playing a solo, communicating a bass-line and singing. Yes! Singing!

Janek Gwizdala

A member of the Institute's visiting bass faculty, Janek is a solo recording artist, musical director for Capitol recording artist VV Brown, and sideman to the likes of Mike Stern, Randy Brecker, Delta Goodrem, Airto and Pat Metheny.
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JANEK GWIZDALA

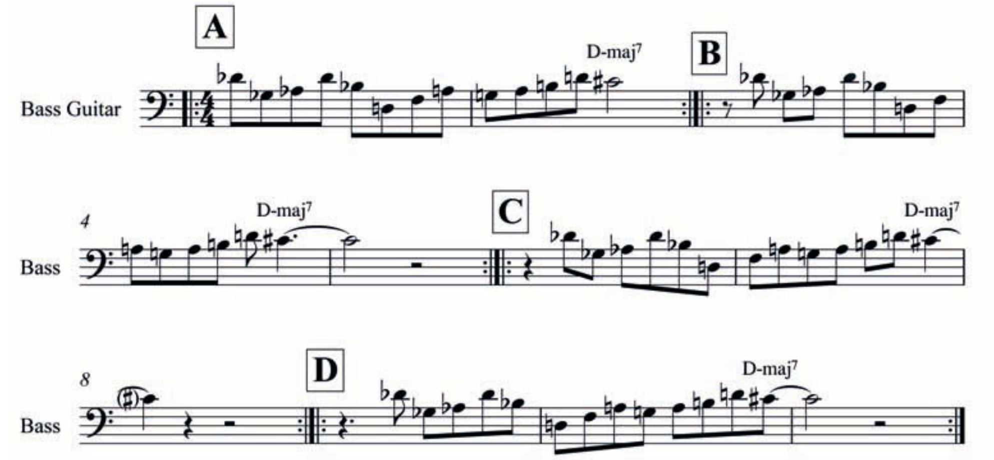
Rhythmically Displacing A Phrase

Our man Gwizdala revisits basic concepts and digs into the details to keep things sounding fresh and funky

It's been an interesting month of getting back into working on some basic concepts in my playing. I've been doing that in order to strip away things that I've played over and over again for years, and have been trying to replace the old with the new by changing small details of some of my commonly used phrases.

As an example for this column, I want to use a Michael Brecker-style phrase that I probably transcribed about 15 years ago. The more often I hear myself play it, the more motivated I am to keep developing it, so that it doesn't get monotonous. I was in the studio all night last night, jamming with Hadrien Feraud and talking about just this topic, because we both find ourselves in a position of having repeated a lot of basic vocabulary over many years. We're both striving to find ways to develop that further, and make more music out of the same 12 notes we all have to work with.

One of the things I've been working on recently is taking a single phrase and moving it around rhythmically to generate different target notes and different points of tension in the lines I'm playing. The sheet music example here shows a two-bar Michael Brecker-style phrase that has a target note of C#. I'm thinking of that C# as being a major 7th tension on a minor chord. Hence that chord symbol that you may not have seen before – D-maj7. The "-" sign denotes that it's a minor chord, and the "maj7" lets you know that the 7th is natural in the key, in this case C#, rather than a flat 7th that you might find on a minor 7 chord.



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There are, as always, a number of different ways to look at each four-note cell of the phrase and give it a theoretical analysis. You could take this phrase and say that the first four notes are Dbmaj, then D min with the flat 6th (Bb), then a G major pentatonic ending up on the target note of C#, our natural 7th on a minor chord. Now that's an accurate but rather long-winded way of explaining a phrase. If you just play it over a Dmin chord repeatedly, you'll start to have a natural feel for what kinds of melodic statements and tension is being created by playing those shapes. And the less you try to think about it in terms of theory, the more natural your playing is going to become.

You also don't have to play it over Dmin. I just left the first bar of each phrase blank in terms of the harmony, and have given you this option of the C# target note over a Dmin chord. It's one of many options. And the great thing about having a fluid phrase like this under your fingers, and understanding what tension C# can become on a multitude of chords, is that you're going to give yourself a lot of contexts and situations to play this phrase in. It's not just 13 notes, it's a melodic statement that has the power to change harmony, tension, melody, and interaction with a band depending on where you play it. So not only can this be an exercise template for rhythmic displacement (the idea being that you play this one phrase in eight different places in a bar, by moving it an 8th note later than the time before) but once you have this in your muscle memory, it can be the catalyst for harmonic and melodic exploration that may well keep you occupied for days. I know that's what it's been doing for me.

I've taken several phrases like this, and have made a conscious effort to make them sound nothing like they did when I started. The details can sometimes look so simple, but I've found that they are the things that, when you pay attention to them, can be the difference between a good player and a great player. And they're certainly a wealth of inspiration for me to discover as much music as I can from each small phrase, before moving on to the next thing.

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Paul Geary

Andrew is the Head Of Bass at Tech Music School in London and plays with the renowned James Taylor Quartet.

For the full Tuition Tip archive, including sound files and videos, visit Andrew's teacher profile at www.techmusicschool.co.uk. In every issue of this magazine, Andrew features a different class taught at the School, giving you a bite-size chunk of the lesson and an insight into his course.

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Tech MUSIC SCHOOL

ANDREW MCKINNEY

TUITION TIP: KEYBOARDS ON BASS

Keyboard/MD interview: Simon Carter

Following on from the recent change of tack, this month I spoke to keyboard player and MD Simon Carter about all things bass. Simon has a wealth of experience playing with some of the finest bass players in the land, so if anyone can advise us on how we should go about things, it's him. Simon has toured with the likes of Jamiroquai, Craig David, Nik Kershaw, Leo Sayer and Ronny Jordan. Also he is the founder, pianist and host for the legendary Boaters jazz gig, which is held every Sunday night at a pub in Kingston. Every week you can see the cream of the UK jazz and session scene letting their hair down and generally playing their asses off, so it's well worth a visit.

We are very lucky to have Simon teaching at Tech Music School as one of the MDs for our Live Performance Workshops on the degree course, where he puts the students through their paces and brings in a huge wealth of expertise and experience to the workshop. At TMS, Simon has a reputation as something of a taskmaster, but when you've toured the world with the greatest, you get accustomed to a certain standard and there's nothing wrong with encouraging the students to aim high – of course, all in a very supportive and nurturing way!

Just before jetting off to Denmark for a Nik Kershaw gig, Simon took the time to sit down and talk me through his bible for bass…

What are the qualities that you most value in a bass player?

In the early days of the Boaters gig, I used to play bass myself and I got to play with some amazing drummers like Ian Thomas, Chris Dagley and Neal Wilkinson. I never had the chops to play bass as I wanted to play it, so I just thought as long as I can choose my notes well, play really good time and keep the drummers happy, then I'm playing to the best of my ability. It sounds obvious, but this is exactly what I look for in a bass player myself – just good time and good choice of notes. Ian Thomas paid me a great compliment once when we were on a gig together, by saying that he found it so easy to play with me because I just kept things simple and played good time.

Again it sounds obvious, but the thing that's important to me about bass players is them playing the root note when it's required, and playing beat one when it's required. It's fundamental but so important. As a keyboard player how I play depends on what's going on underneath me. Playing a keyboard part is made so much easier when the bass is doing the most stylistically appropriate thing for the tune.

It's also really important how the bass player and drummer work collectively. It doesn't matter if one of them is great: if the other one isn't really on the same page, it doesn't work.

Who are your favourite bass players to work with, and what is it about them that you most value?

The first person I have to mention is Phil Mulford. We've played together for so long now it feels as though we've got a telepathic thing going on. I love playing with him because I know that he's always really listening. We're often playing groove-based music, but with a jazz head on, so there is the opportunity to change the arrangements and some of the harmony on the fly. He's the bass player that I find it the easiest to do this with because we both listen to each other so much. It feels like we both know what the other one is going to do.

Laurence Cottle is another guy I've played with a lot, through my gigs at Boaters, and with him it's like an education. He was one of the bass players I used to go and see all the time when I first moved to London. I just loved his playing and the bands he played with, so when I got the chance to play with him it was such a great privilege, and the more I played with him the more I realised just what a fantastic musician he is. It isn't just about his ridiculous technique, which is incredible; it's just the fact that musically he's so switched on. It's also because he just loves to

come and play – that's a really important thing with Laurie. He's played with some very big names, and yet at the end of the day he's really happy to come and do a small jazz gig just because he loves playing so much.

The bass player I've worked with most in the last few years playing with Nik Kershaw is Paul Geary. Paul's a fantastic bass player and he's also got that unenviable job of trying to play Nik's bass-lines, which were sometimes sequenced on a keyboard rather than played on a bass, especially the early stuff. It's all very musical and some of it is quite complex. Paul always manages to make the parts work on a bass guitar, and he always plays with such a great sound.

Another player I'd like to mention is Janek Gwizdala, not that these days I get to play with him such a great deal. I've known him since he was 15 and he wasn't even playing the bass then, he was a guitarist. Since then I've watched him first become a great bass player, and then over the years turn into truly one of the world's finest bass players. It's an incredible journey and it's nice to be part of that. Even though I don't play with him very often, every time I do he amazes me even more so than the last time.

In your opinion, what are the most common things bass players get wrong?

The worst thing is when the bass player only thinks about the bass and their bass-line, rather than their role in the band as a whole. When I teach I often say to students that they've got to stop thinking 'check me out', and instead make it 'check us out'. When you're doing a gig it's not about how you play individually or how impressive you think your playing is, it's about the unit as a whole and how good we sound together. That applies to everyone – not just bass players.

I think bass players have got to be really careful and selective about when they do something that people will notice, because sometimes with the best bass players you don't notice them, they just do what it says on the tin – they play great groove, great notes and they lock in brilliantly with the drummer. You can go the whole gig and not actually realise if they've got any chops or not, because they just sound so great. With some bass players, it's only when they try and do something that's inappropriate or it's not the right occasion that you realise they're missing the point. They try and do a fill because there's a gap in the music, but sometimes there's a reason for that gap – the vocals are doing a pickup, or there's a drum fill. I often think that when you're not aware of what's going on around you, you can chose the wrong time to show off.

Who are the bass players you would most like to play with, and why?

When I started getting into jazz-influenced commercial music – things like Al Jarreau, George Benson, Chaka Khan and so on – I kept on finding Abe Laboriel's name on the album covers. He's not one of those bass players that really stands out, he just sits there in the mix and plays what is required, perfectly. He's obviously played so often with those great drummers like Steve Gadd and Jeff Porcaro that they just sound awesome together. I think balancing bass on records is tricky: when it's too loud it's too obtrusive, and when it's not loud enough you're always complaining that there's not enough bottom end. I always felt that with him, he was one of those bass players that never needed to be too loud in the mix. He was often quite unobtrusive, because of his brilliant sense of groove. He could play some high lines, but they would never get in the way – they were perfect for the song. The Breaking Away album by Al Jarreau is a great example of his playing: see tracks like 'Closer To Your Love' and 'We're In This Love Together'.

Pino Palladino is somebody I would love to play with. We both played on the same album once, but on different tracks, so we've never actually played together, even though I've seen him play lots and met him several times. The thing with Pino is that you can see the journey that he's gone through. When I was growing up I was a big fan of people like Paul Young, and I can still listen to those records now and be in total awe of the lines that Pino plays on tracks like 'Every Time You Go Away', 'I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down' and 'Wherever I Lay My Hat': the bass is so integral. When he later moved into the neo-soul thing, playing with D'Angelo and Erykah Badu, it really showed you what a complete bass player and musician he is. I can't imagine playing with him and not having a smile on my face the whole time!

From a jazz perspective, I'd love to have played with Ray Brown, because I think that he's one of the most swinging bass players I've ever heard. He had such a warm sound and his tuning was absolutely incredible. When somebody plays with quite a long, legato sound like Ray, tuning has to be impeccable and it always was with him. I really loved his sense of swing when he was playing with Oscar Peterson, and also his own trio: it's my idea of how swing should feel. You can't get any better than that.

What things do you think would be valuable for bass players to practise?

A lot of times the bass guitar and the kick drum are really locked in, so if there's a particular pattern or push, you create this together as part of the rhythm section. A really good way of working on your timing and sense of subdivision is to play those types of bass-lines, but without support from the drums – that way you're very exposed. Set up a simple drum beat with bass drum on 1 and 3, snare on 2 and 4 and then work through some different rhythms. Try recording yourself and put the bass drum in afterwards and see how well you've locked in. When the bass drum's not there, you really have to think about your sense of subdivision and not rushing any of the 16ths, and also keeping the dynamic under control. When playing syncopated parts, some bass players make those notes jump out because they're too focused on them and not relaxed, and it can be a little snatched rhythmically and dynamically too loud. Sometimes the 8th note rhythms can be harder than the 16th notes – they don't always sound as relaxed as they could be. It's about your internal metronome and your internal sense of dynamics. Spending time on this sort of exercise is really going to make drummers and keyboard players want to play with you!

To see who Simon will be playing with at the Boaters gig, visit www.boaterslivemusic.com.

I hope you enjoyed this alternative viewpoint and have learnt something valuable. I'll be interviewing various different musicians over the next few issues – let me what you think or if there's anything particular you would like to see! ***andrew.mckinney@techmusicschool.co.uk, www.andrewmckinney.co.uk.***

Exercises

These exercises will help you work on locking in with a drummer. Program the first drum beat and play the bass line round and round, really focusing on your note placement and internal dynamic, making sure that at all times the groove sounds flowing and in the pocket.

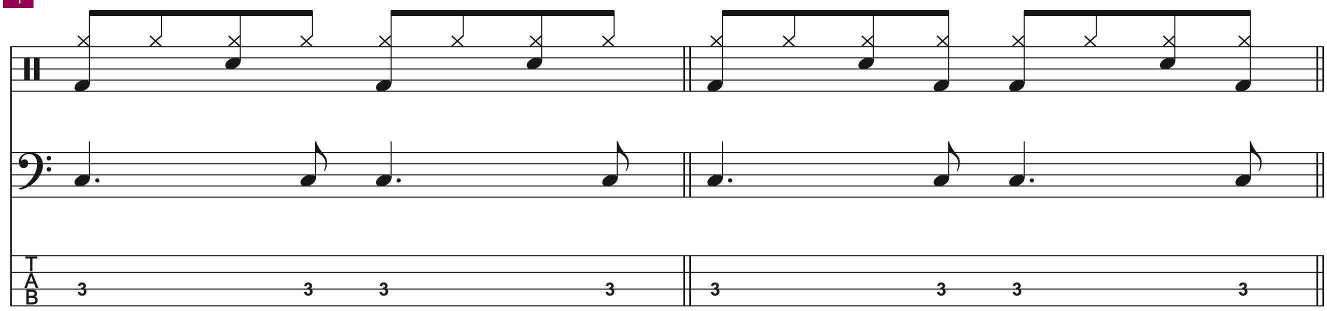
Start at a slow tempo – around 50 to 60bpm. If you can record yourself doing this, then do so. Listening back will allow you to critically evaluate your playing from an objective standpoint.

The next step is to then edit the drum beat to make it match the bass-line more closely, as displayed in the second bar. If you have the technology, put this with your original recorded bass-line to see how close they match up. If not, then try playing along with this version after the simple one and focus on lining up really tight with the bass drum. Then go back to the original version of the drum beat and try to maintain the same feel and intensity. Becoming independently strong with this sort of thing means that when we do come together with a great drummer, we can actively project a strong time feel, making the end result even greater.

Exercise one

This is a simple 8th-note pattern that is very common, but that doesn't mean it should be overlooked. Really focus on the placement of the second note (on the '&' of two), as doing this without the support of the bass drum is a real challenge. In order to do this you have to be in tune with the 8th note subdivision – use the hi-hats as a reference to start with.

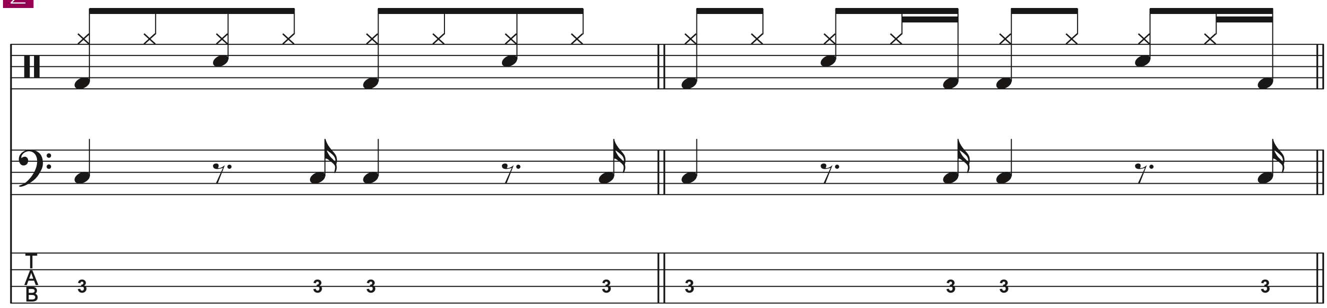
1



Exercise two

A very similar pattern, but much more difficult! The second note is now on a semiquaver beat (the 'a' of two), so the target will seem smaller. Again, the subdivision is key and this time you need to be thinking in 16th notes (1 e & a, 2 e & a, and so on). If it helps, add the 16th notes into the hi-hat pattern, but once you've got used to it, take them out again.

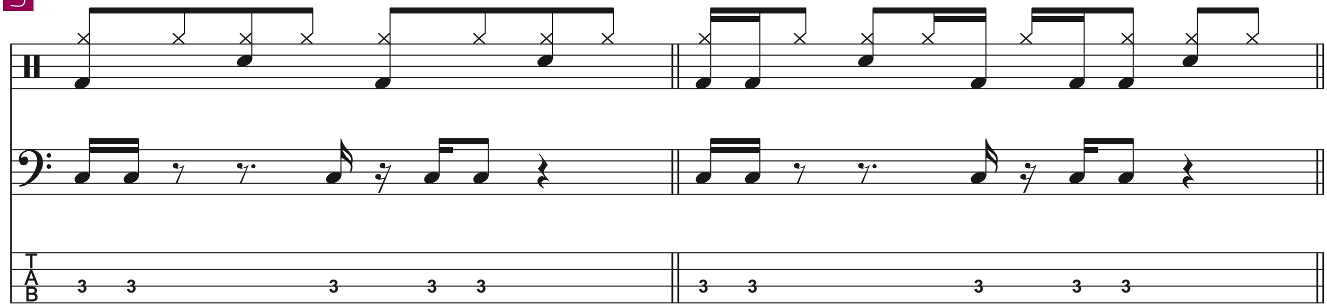
2



Exercise three

This is a much busier and more syncopated pattern, and shows you the sort of level you can take this exercise to. Work out variations of your own or use this to work on songs you want to play. Check out 'Nighttime In The Switching Yard' by Warren Zevon for a great example of 'locking in'. Have fun!

3



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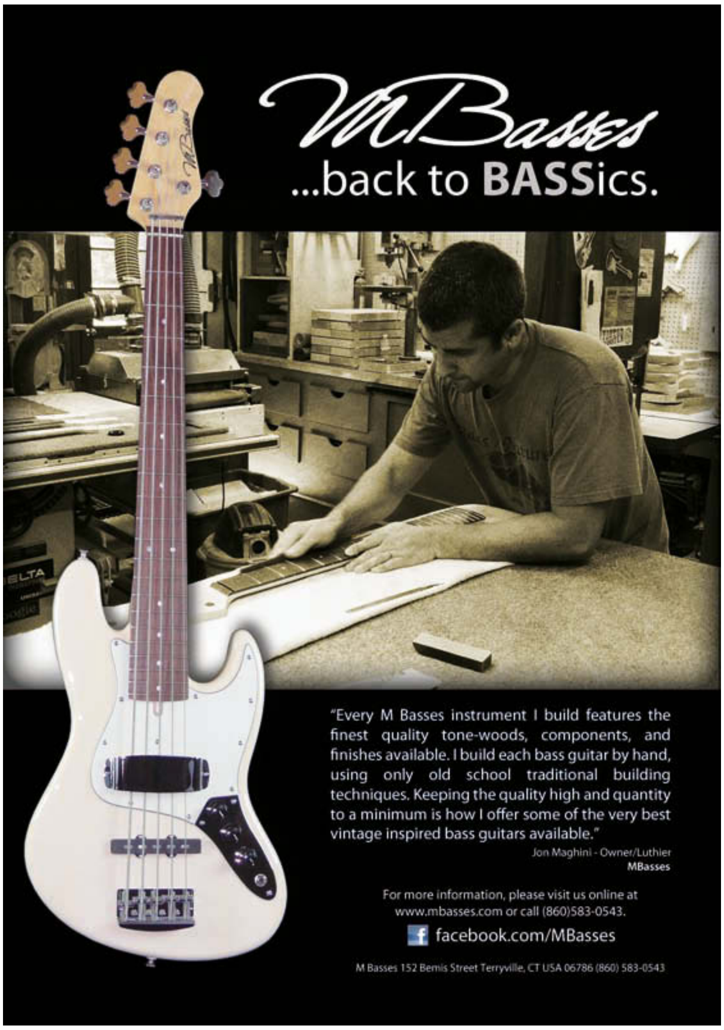

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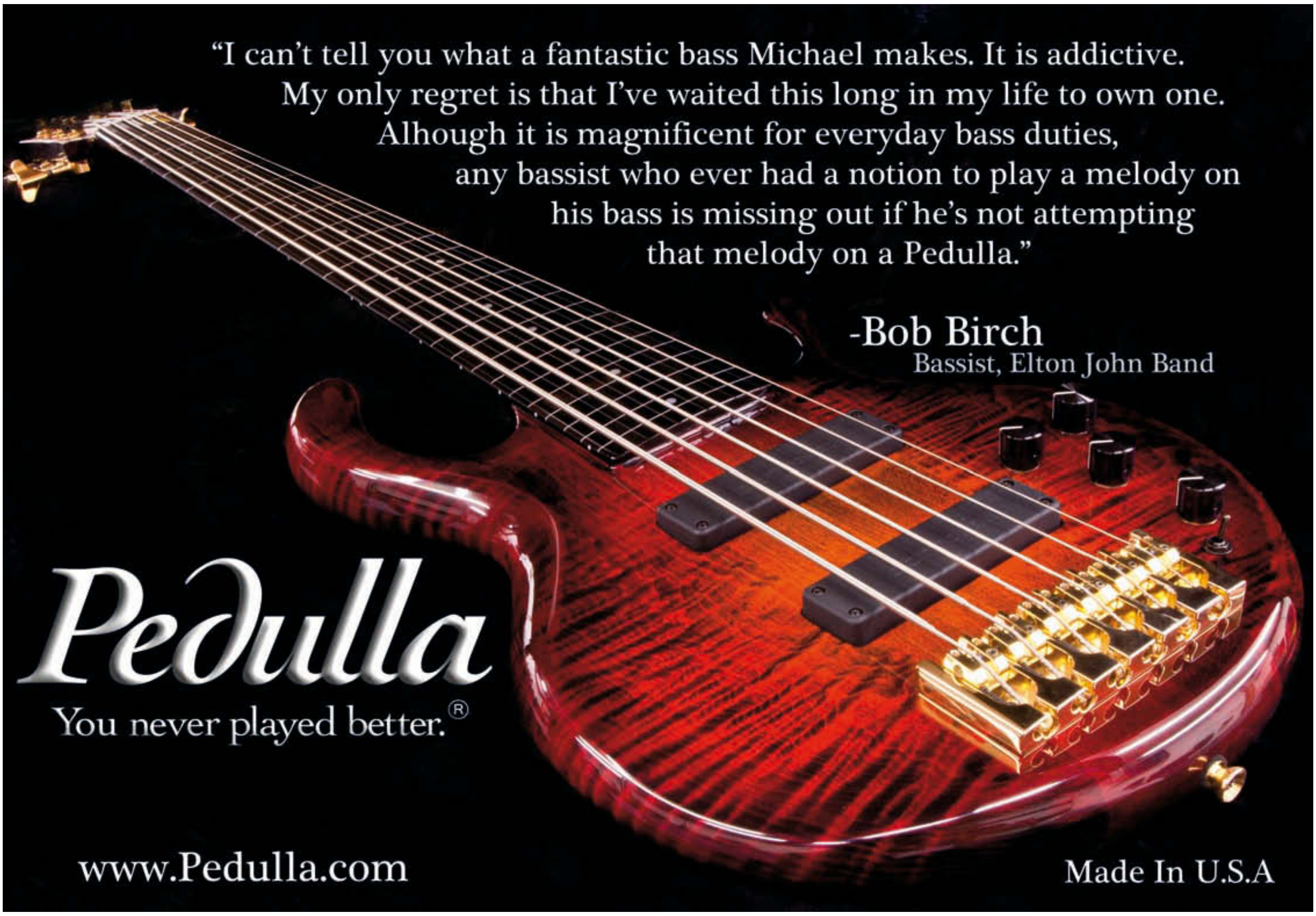
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FRANC O'SHEA

BASS BEYOND

Franc tries to freshen up walking bass-lines

Franc O'Shea

Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Brighton, Franc has worked with Steve Howe (Yes), Lisa Moorish, and Mike Lindup (Level 42). Described by Bass Guitar Magazine as 'the most musical of virtuoso bassists', Franc has also produced two solo albums. His most recent album, 'Alkimia', features Flamenco and Jazz legends Jorge Pardo and Rubem Dantas from Chick Corea's and Paco de Lucia's bands. Franc uses Jeff Chapman basses and Elites strings.
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Walking bass is often shrouded in mystery. Many writers jump straight in at the deep end, using advanced concepts that can confuse the novice walker. I have partly covered the subject before (see *BGM 73*), but this too was fairly advanced. There are many bassists that I teach who are not necessarily jazz players, but would nonetheless like to be able to create effective walking bass-lines when the need calls. To endure in today's industry, musicians often need to be adept in as many styles as they can. Walking bass is an important skill that can only add to the modern bassist's set of musical tools. I plan to give you some foundational concepts, which can help you create effective and functional walking bass lines.

So how would we define the term? Walking bass not only creates a constant flow of rhythmic motion (hence 'walking'), but also underlines the chord sequence, creating a foundation for the harmony. Chord sequences, as we have seen in previous columns, come in many flavours, but for convenience I will be looking at sequences that have a set amount of chords in a bar, starting with two chords per bar. You will find that there are some sequences that have a chord on every beat (usually slow ballads), but it is more common to have either one or two chords per bar.

Some tunes, especially in modal jazz, vamp on one chord for several bars. If you have a chord for each beat of the bar in a bar of 4/4, the most straightforward approach would be to play the root note of each chord, since walking bass-lines are usually based on quarter-note values. You could use other notes for one chord per beat sequences, but these would generally be other chord tones or linking notes, so the overall focus would be to provide root notes.

However, my focus this month is sequences that have two chords per bar. I am going to use a Imaj7, VI7, II-7, V7 sequence, which is commonly used in jazz, often – but not always – as a turnaround to lead back to the beginning of a different sequence in the same key. I'm going to use the key of C major for my example, and the first thing to do is to map out where all the root notes for each chord are on the neck. So the sequence will be Cmaj7 and A7 in one bar, and then D-7 and G7 in the next bar. We will then keep repeating this sequence with a view to creating variations of the bass-line with each successive repetition – walking bass lines tend not to overly repeat themselves.

To create variation you need to be able to link the various root notes of each chord in different octaves, and I would suggest that you start out by playing the sequence with just root notes on beats 1 and 3 as half notes. So where are all the C notes on a four-string bass? They are at the 8th and 20th frets of the E string, the 3rd and 15th frets of the A string, the 10th and 22nd frets of the D string, and the 5th and 17th frets of the G string. The best way to play them in succession, however, is to play them in octaves in relative positions, so you would play the C at the 3rd fret of the A string followed by its octave, the C at the 5th fret of the G string. You would then move position and play the C at the 8th fret of the E string, followed by its octave, the C at the 10th fret of the D string, and so on. You may only rarely use the higher positions above the 12th fret, but it's good to know where they are.

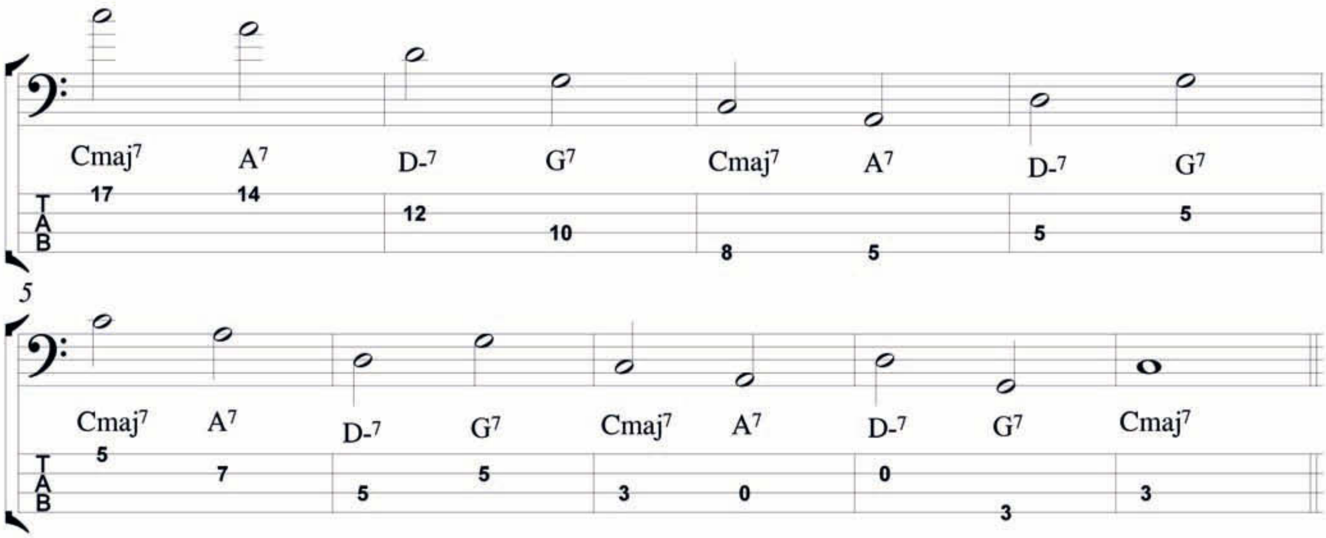
The main point is that you know where all the Cs are on your bass, as we are effectively creating a map of where the roots are located for each of the chords in our chosen sequence. You should do this same exercise with the roots of the other chords as well, so you need to find all the As, Ds and Gs on your bass neck using the same process – don't forget the open strings!

Now that we know where all the root notes are for these chords on the fingerboard, let's analyse the relationship between them. If we start with the C at the 3rd fret of the A string for the Cmaj7 chord, we can then look to see where all the As are in its vicinity, for the A7 chord that the Cmaj7 is moving to. The most obvious A would be the open A string, down three frets from the C. This A is also reproduced in the same octave at the 5th fret of the E string. The A that is in the octave above this lower A appears at the 7th fret on the D string and the 2nd fret on the G string. From this we can deduce that there are four different As that we could move to that are close to the C at the 3rd fret on the A string.

Once we have decided what A root note we are going to move to from the C, we can then look for the D notes that are in the vicinity of the A. As the chords will move from A7 to D-7 and then from D-7 to G7 back to the original Cmaj7, we can do this for every change in the sequence. You will notice several choices for each successive root you land on; which direction you move in is up to you.

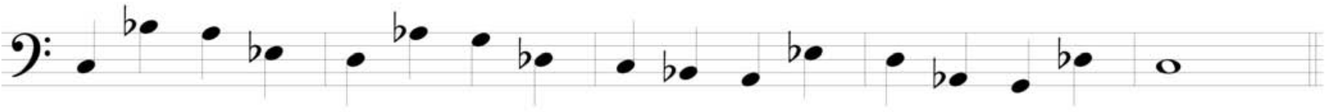
Example one

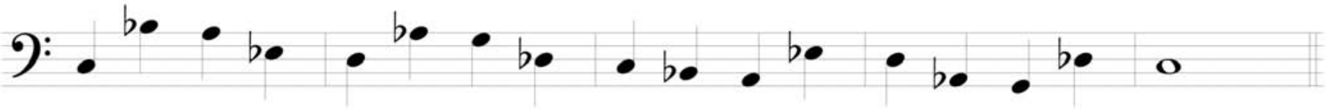
In *example one* I have shown some of the available options and highlighted the fact that, apart from the 'minor 3rd down/ major 6th up' relationship between the C and A root notes, the root note motion is down in 5ths and up in 4ths, which can be mixed and matched as you please.



Examples two and three

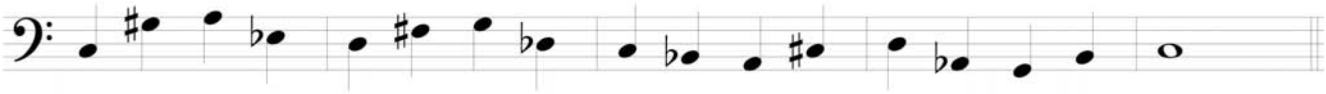
What if we want to create a full walking line? We need to add notes that come on the second and fourth beats, so that our bass-line ends up having four beats to the bar. Since we are hitting root notes on the first and third beats, we can use chromatic leading notes on beats two and four, thus creating tension that resolves. We can start doing this by playing the note a semitone below each root note – no matter whether we are moving up or down – as demonstrated in *example two*. We can then try doing the opposite by playing the note a semitone above each root note, as in *example three*. Either of these approaches will work, but you may want to create a smoother line by combining both approaches.





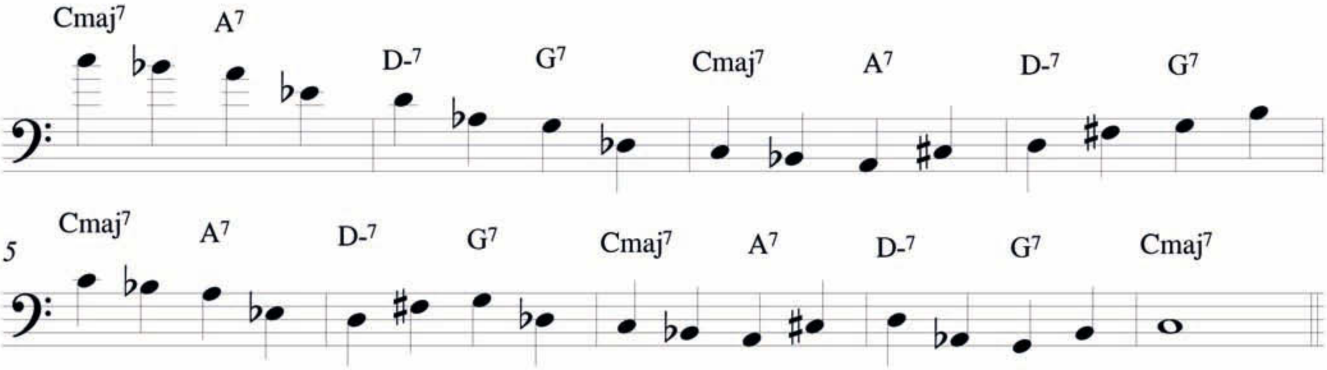
Example four

Example four demonstrates the use of both methods by leading chromatically up to the next root, if the root note is higher in pitch, and chromatically down if the next root is lower in pitch. This use of root note, chromatic leading note, root note, chromatic leading note and so on creates a common theme in jazz of tension and release, with the chromatic leading notes creating the tension that is released when the root of the chord is reached. If you compare example four with *examples two* and *three*, you will notice that it looks smoother visually. You are of course welcome to use diatonic scale tones in your lines as well for more variation.



Example five

Example five shows us the same root note motion as in example one. However, we now have four quarter notes to the bar and a combination of the approaches used in *examples two* and *three* are employed to create a smooth walking line. This month's column therefore gives you an idea of how a relatively simple method can provide you with effective and functional walking bass-lines. I suggest you practise these methods in other keys and also with other sequences, so that you become familiar with the approach and can improvise with it by taking it in any direction on the spot.



Kevin Sanders

Kev Sanders is a freelance electric and double bassist who has gigged and recorded with artists as diverse as singer Clare Teal and legendary saxophonist Pete King, to the Levellers and multi award-winning Korean classical pianist Ingrid Wu. As well as numerous BBC radio and television sessions, he's played over 4000 live gigs, appearing everywhere from Brussels to Broadway and as head of Bass Studies for AMS he developed and wrote both the full time Btec and Degree courses.

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Essential John Paul Jones

The Song Remains The Same'
JPJ provides the perfect foil for Page's rhythmic guitar part. Absolutely nailed.

'Bring it On Home'
Another classic guitar and bass unison riff.

'Dazed And Confused'
A cool mix of gritty rock and psychedelic blues, with a bass part that mirrors the guitar part right from the off.

'Ramble On'
Note the textbook use of major 6th and 10th intervals for the verse. This could almost have been played by Chuck Rainey. There's a tight, Jaco-like semiquaver approach to the chorus.

'The Wanton Song'
Great unison funk line verse, with a Jamerson-inspired, smooth, laid-back instrumental bridge.

'Custard Pie'
How funky is this? As well as nailing the bass part, JPJ also comes over all Stevie and plays the clavinet keyboard part too.

KEVIN SANDERS

I WANT TO PLAY LIKE... JOHN PAUL JONES

The Zeppelin maestro under the microscope

Despite being best known as the bass player in one of the biggest rock bands of all time, there's so much more to John Paul Jones's CV than just Led Zeppelin anchorman. He took up bass early on, but was always interested in music in the broader sense, playing keyboards, mandolin, and guitar as well as honing his recording and production skills while working as a session player in the 60s. Back then, he was one of the busiest studio players on the scene, and he's still at it. He's played and recorded mandolin for R.E.M. and the Foo Fighters, and recently collaborated with authentic bluesman Seasick Steve on the album *You Can't Teach An Old Dog New Tricks* as well as forming the supergroup Them Crooked Vultures.

As well as nailing down solid root note grooves, and doubling Jimmy Page's blues-drenched pentatonic power riffs, Jones is also a great rock bass soloist. This skill is perhaps best demonstrated on the Zeppelin track 'The Lemon Song' from the band's 1969 album *Led Zeppelin II*. The track 'borrows' from several old blues songs: the main riff is from Howlin' Wolf's 'Killing Floor' while the lyric owes a great deal to Robert Johnson's 'Travelling Riverside Blues'. No matter, Led Zep made it their own, featuring a John Paul Jones solo that ranks as one of the best rock bass solos ever recorded.

JPJ's Style

John Paul Jones's style is an interesting blend of old and new, mixing tradition with the contemporary 60s pop sound. How could it not be? Any bassist plying their trade at the time of both the British blues boom, and the peak of the Motown and Stax era, would surely have been influenced by both. However, Jones was a great player in his own right, and few bassists either then or since have managed to fuse all of these styles together so effectively. Like Jaco, a lot of JPJ's playing was around the middle register of his bass, and although he didn't share Jaco's very 'correct' left-hand style, his playing was often peppered with fast and intricate passages.

JPJ'S GEAR

Like most bass players who started out in the 60s and 70s, John Paul Jones's main basses throughout the era were Fenders. These included a '59 Precision, and an iconic '62 sunburst Jazz bass, which he used for most of his recording and live performances with Led Zeppelin. During the 80s he played Alembics, but for many years now he's had a close relationship with Hugh Manson of Manson Guitars, and it's these instruments he now favours. Amp-wise he's been fairly conservative, for a long time using Acoustic 360s, a set-up also favoured by Jaco Pastorius. More recently, he's been using SWR equipment.

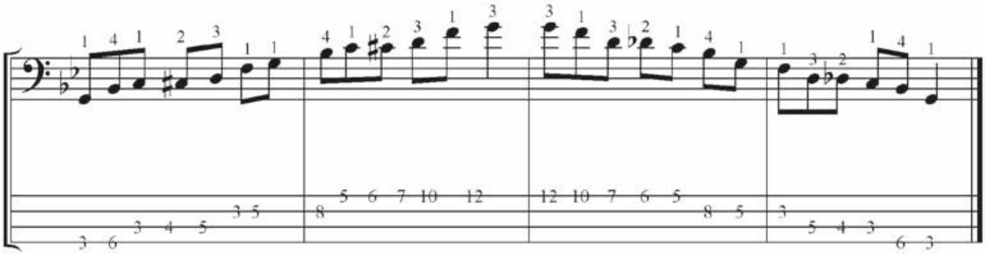
At least part of the success of Jones's style is his ability to play heavy rock infused with a serious funk and groove element. When soloing, most of his phrases are either a variation of the minor pentatonic, sometimes called the blues scale, or licks based on dominant 7th scales and arpeggios played over major chords

To kick off, let's just refresh our memory and run through these scales:

Exercises

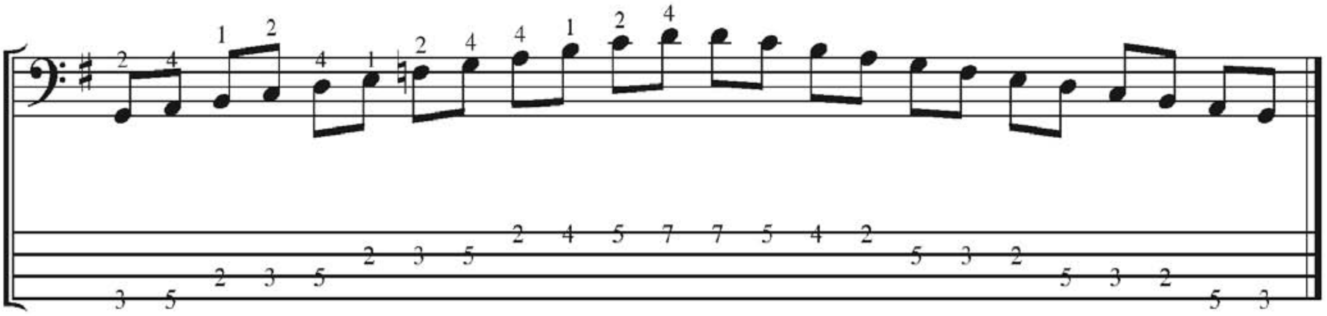
Exercise one: The Blues Scale (two octaves, in G)

This scale and others (like the 'jazz' scale) are not true scales in the traditionally accepted sense. They're variations on other scales that are particularly useful for soloing. This blues scale used by John Paul Jones, and just about every other rock bass player, is a derivation of the standard minor pentatonic. The difference is just one note, a passing note between the 4th and 3rd degrees of the minor pentatonic. This note, the augmented fourth, which has traditionally been called a 'blues' note, adds movement to the scale and makes it very effective for soloing.



Exercise 2: G Dominant 7th (Mixolydian) played up to the 12th

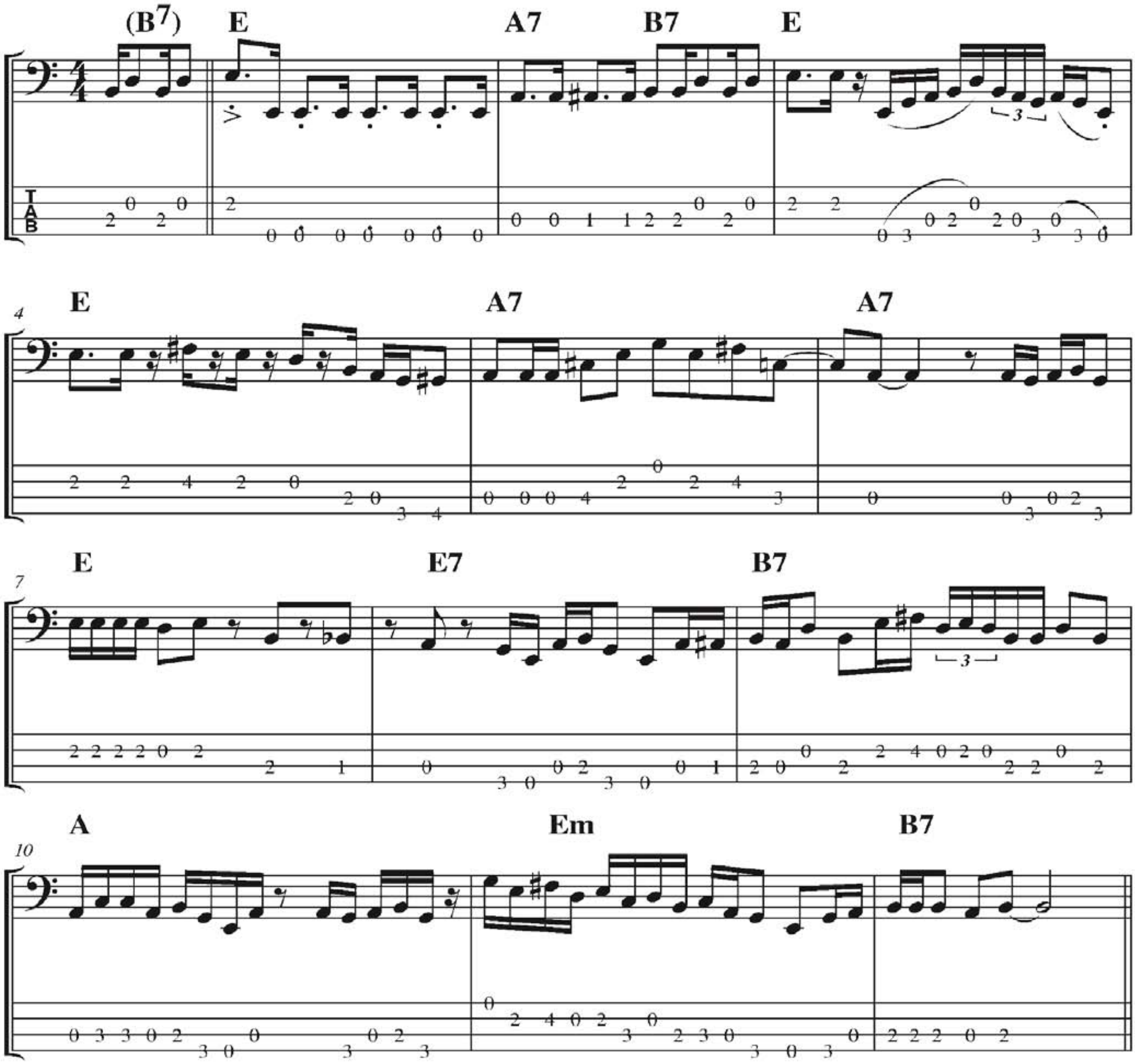
This is just a G major scale with a flattened 7th:



Exercise 3: Call it Karma

I've borrowed motifs for our JPJ-style solo from various Led Zeppelin songs such as 'Whole Lotta Love', which was actually written by blues double bassist Willie Dixon. Just to make things even more interesting, I've included part of the horn phrase from the version performed by session band CCS, which was used as the theme tune to the old BBC Top Of The Pops show through most of the 70s. Also used are reworked motifs from 'Black Dog' and 'Rock And Roll' as well as the riff from 'Sunshine Of Your Love' from Zep's 60s contemporaries Cream. Set your bass EQ to the front pickup and add a little overdrive for that authentic Led Zep vibe.

Slow Rock/Blues ♩ = 90



Dave Marks

Dave Marks is a busy freelance bassist living and working out of London. His playing and recording credits span a wide range of bands and artists, including Hurts, Nik Kershaw, Wishbone Ash, Julian Perretta, Larry Carlton, Albert Lee, Carl Palmer and many others.

At the minute his time is spread between pounding out 8th-note rock with the Rick Parfitt Jnr band, touring with his 'RhythmMatters' masterclasses and depping internationally with Hurts and for Thriller Live on the West End.

Aside from his full playing, teaching and masterclass schedule, Dave maintains a heavy web presence, between his own site, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter pages.

For backing tracks to use with this lesson, visit ***www.davebasslessons.com***

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DAVE MARKS: MELODIC BASS PLAYING

MODES

Part two of my series on modes. This month: the Dorian mode

Hopefully last month's column has started you on the road to mastering the modes without scaring you too much. We started off looking at the familiar sound of the major scale and dealing with the idea of melodic and harmonic resolution – of creating a sense of 'home' that you can resolve to.

There are a number of different ways of approaching the modes and with that, a number of ways that you can apply them to your playing. The simplest way to start is to isolate the chord that each mode fits over, create a vamp and play over it to become familiar with the sound and shape of each mode.

I'm going to deal with the modes in the order that they naturally occur, so the second mode we'll look at is the Dorian mode. If we look at C major as our parent key, we can use the D Dorian mode over a Dm7 vamp.

Fig. 01

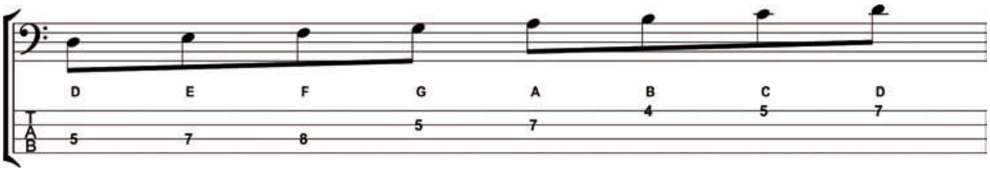


Fig. 01 shows the notes of D Dorian – you should notice that it contains all of the same notes as the C Ionian mode (major scale) that we looked at last month. The difference is that now, our point of resolution is on the note D.

Fig. 02

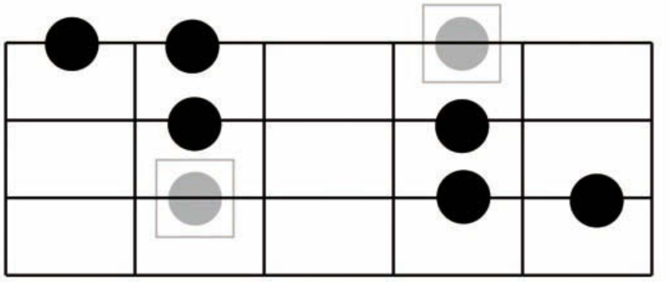


Fig. 02 shows a fretboard diagram to help you picture the shape you'll be using. I'd advise using fingers 1, 3 and 4 on the A string, then fingers 1 and 4 on the D string. This allows you to open your hand up and reach back to the 4th fret of the G string to get that B natural note without stretching. On the G string, simply use fingers 1, 2 and 4. It may help to think of it in stages as: one-finger-per-fret, shift hand position, then one-finger-per-fret.

Fig. 03

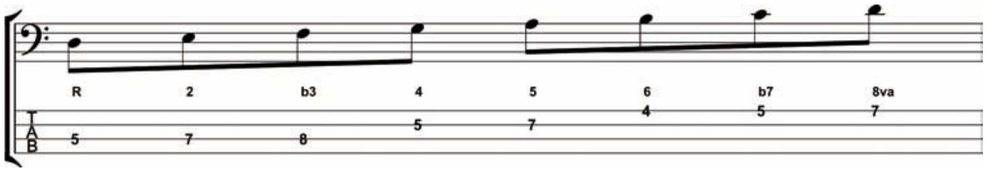


Fig. 03 shows the scale degrees that are present when we play D Dorian. If you isolate the I, II and V, you'll find D, F and A – the root, b3rd and 5th of a D minor chord. Add to that the b7th, C natural and we have a D minor 7 chord to vamp over.

Although you can use modes to navigate complex chord progressions, you can also think of them simply as a colour – a certain type of harmony to write over.

Fig. 04

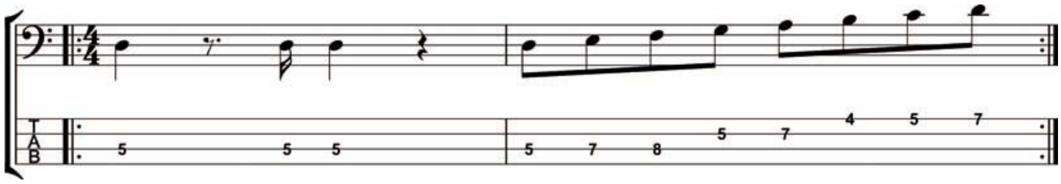
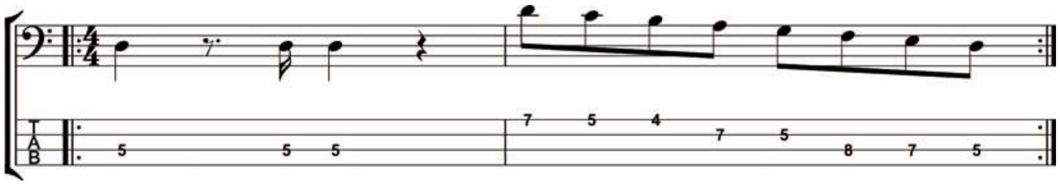


Fig. 05



So how shall we practise the D Dorian scale? Most bass players practise groove playing, then they practice fills and melodic ideas. I've always found this quite odd, as it's the integration of melodic ideas into grooves that players struggle with most.

Fig. 04 uses a very simple idea – play one bar of the groove and then one bar of the scale. We'll start by ascending the scale and when you've got that down, try starting from the top of the scale and descending *(Fig. 05)*.

Fig. 06 & Fig. 07

Let's expand that basic idea into a two-bar groove with two bars of the scale. In *Fig. 06*, this idea allows us to ascend and descend across two bars. Make sure to repeat that top note D, so that the scale fits perfectly into two bars. In *Fig. 07*, we start and end at the top of the scale – all the same notes, just the opposite movement.

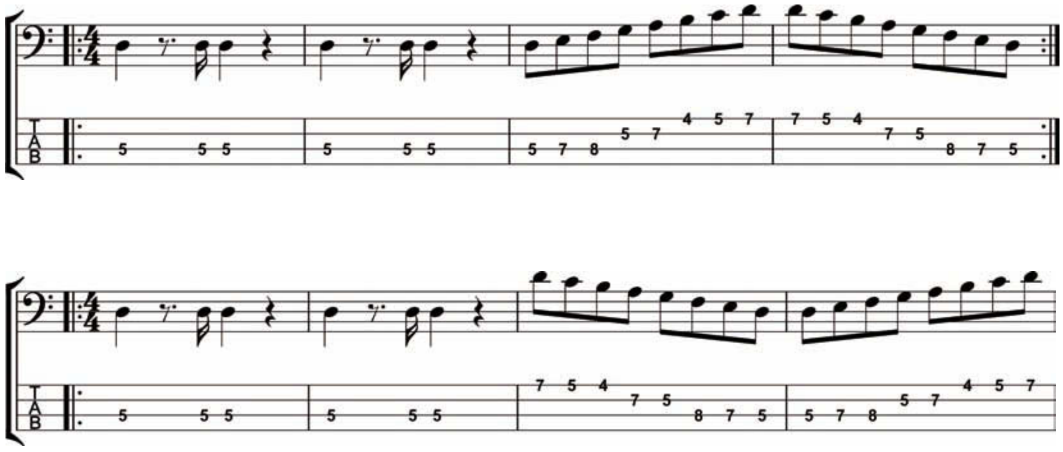
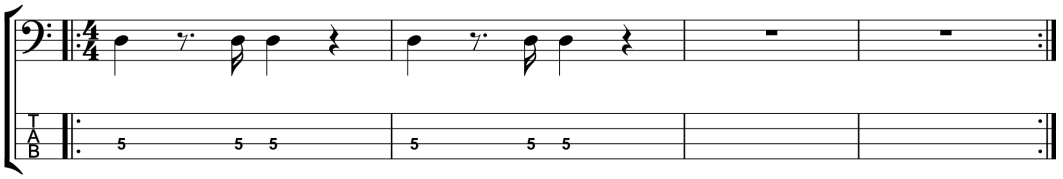


Fig. 08

Let's expand that basic idea into a two-bar groove with two bars of the scale. In *Fig. 06*, this idea allows us to ascend and descend across two bars. Make sure to repeat that top note D, so that the scale fits perfectly into two bars. In *Fig. 07*, we start and end at the top of the scale – all the same notes, just the opposite movement.

To begin with play the ascending scale, but vary the rhythms to create different phrases. Then repeat the same thing with a descending scale before trying to create a one-bar idea and doing an exact repetition. Finally, try creating a one-bar idea and doing a repetition that ends differently.

These are just four simple ideas but they should get you started with playing more freely around the Dorian mode. I've created an MP3 for this lesson, which you can download for free from www.davebasslessons.com. In it, I play through each example, discuss some improvising ideas and also provide two backing tracks for you to practise over.



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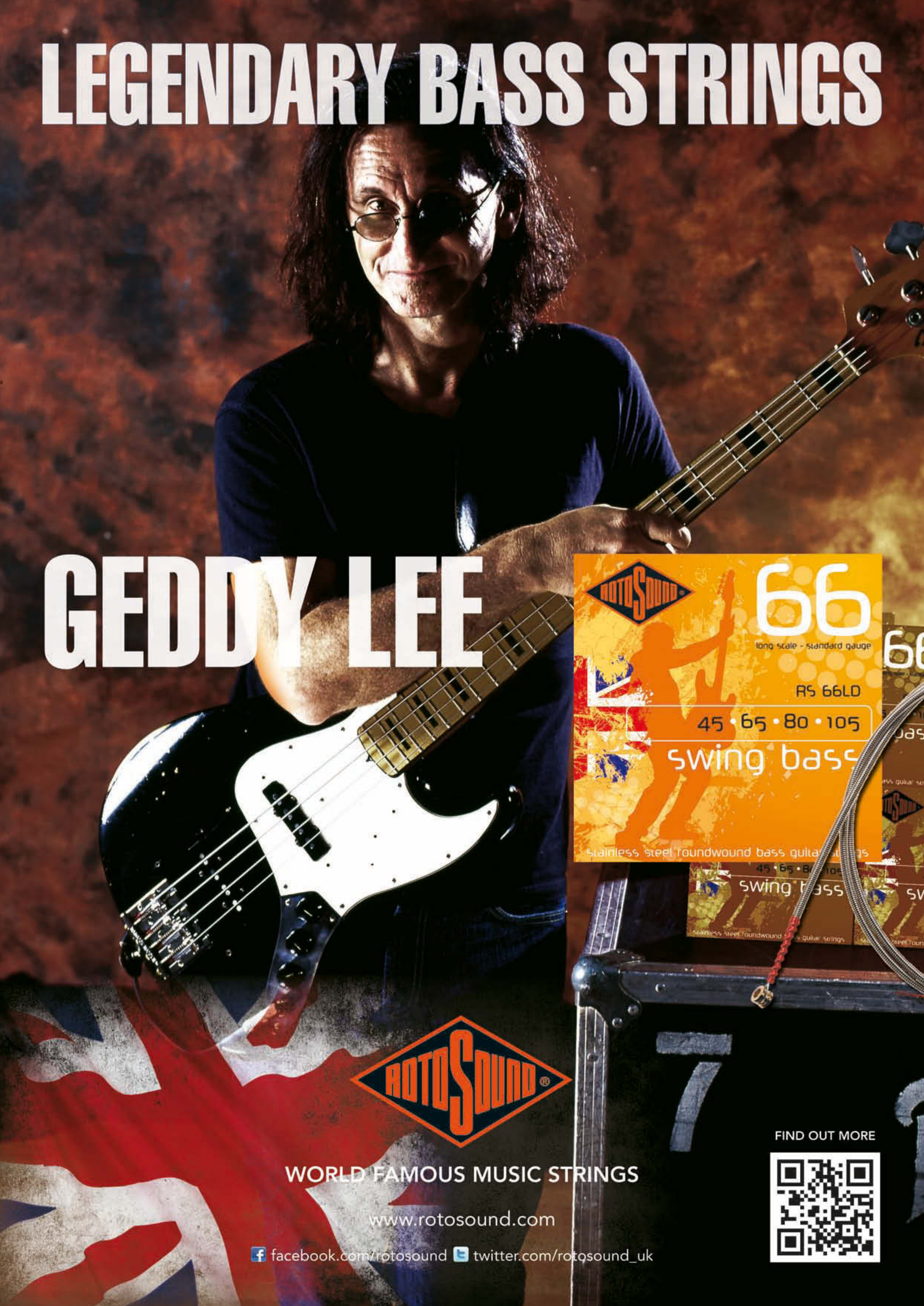

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